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Assessing the Development of Cultural Sensitivity and Intercultural Competence: A Case Study of British University Students in China

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by

Yannan Guo

Thesis submitted to the University of Durham for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the School of Education

February 2007



17 APR 2008

ABSTRACT

This study attempts to understand the development of intercultural competence from a particular perspective. This refers to three aspects. First, the focus of this study is to assess the development of intercultural competence or intercultural sensitivity of a group of students, mainly through their sojourn experience in China. Second, the purpose of this investigation is to understand from the perspective of language and cultural education the implications of such a development to language teaching and learning, with particular interest in business or work-related communication. Third, specific attention was paid in the investigation to the students' work experience in China, as it forms an important part of their sojourn experience, and it thus could provide information about their understanding of intercultural work environment and work-related behaviours.

The study includes two stages: to find answers to the issues such as intercultural competence development, the relationship between language learning and culture learning at the first stage; and to conduct an empirical assessment of intercultural competence development of the students at the second stage. The conceptual framework draws on the theories and research findings of a range of issues including language education, intercultural communication, sojourn experience, cultural differences in work-related behaviours, and assessment of the intercultural competence; and two models, Bennett's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (1992) and Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence (1997) are used in combination for data assessment. The outcomes suggest that through their personal experience the students developed significant competences in handling intercultural communications and difficulties in cross-cultural adaptation, and that a lack of sufficient cultural awareness and skills of eliciting meanings from others sometimes prevented them to be more susceptible to different worldviews, hence less ready to shift perspectives. The use of the two models enables better insights into understanding the data. The results of the analysis could contribute to foreign language teaching and learning at advanced levels in terms of learning content and pedagogy.

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DECLARATION

No material contained in the thesis has previously been submitted for a degree in this or any other university.

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Chapter One

Introduction – Aims, Context, and Structure of the Study

1.1. The Aims of the Study

Like it or not, so-called globalisation is changing our life in every aspect at a fast pace. One of the significant changes that we have seen is that cross-cultural contact or interaction is becoming a norm of the present-day world, and therefore intercultural communication is playing an ever increasingly important role in our life. This inevitably has had great impact on teaching and learning matters as this change has created new demands and challenges to society and its members both in cognition and behaviour. In the fields of teaching and learning of languages and communication we have seen growing emphasis on developing cultural awareness and cultural understanding as an educational aim for personal growth and behavioural change (e.g. Byram, 1997a; Byram and Esarte-Sarries, 1991; Crawshaw, 2005; Kramsch, 1991; 1993; Paige, 1993). Against this general background, this study can be seen as an attempt to understand from one aspect the demands of the present world on the language teaching profession.

I started this research with a general aim to gain better understanding of the implications of intercultural interactions on foreign or second language teaching practice, but the more specific objective is to look closely into a language course that I have been teaching for years from the perspective of language and cultural education. In other words, what I intend to do is to find out within the general education framework whether the course in question can meet the challenge imposed by globalisation, that is, to provide necessary help to the learners both in their development of the attitude, knowledge and skills to effectively communicate with people from different cultures and in facilitating their personal growth, and if not, what is missing. My original intention was to make course design a significant part of the thesis, but the change of situation means a shift in focus, which I will explain below.

Until now Applied Linguistics and Linguistics have been the main disciplinary source for language teaching and learning (e.g. Byram, 1989; 1997a; Kramsch, 1991), and the influence of cultural and sociocultural factors on language behaviours are often ignored. As I will show later, issues such as cultural identity, intergroup relations, behavioural tendencies as well as value differences, etc., are all important ingredients for successful intercultural communication, and therefore should be adequately

addressed in language teaching. Besides, in tackling these issues the learner is very likely to acquire the abilities that are far beyond mere linguistic skills. What I am trying to do in this thesis is to examine language teaching/learning from the lenses of different disciplines related to language and communication behaviours, and to bring together different disciplinary sources, including intercultural communication, social psychology, etc. for the analysis of the case that is under the examination, hoping to become better informed and make proposals for decision making on language teaching issues such as syllabus, learning materials and pedagogy.

The course concerned is a business Chinese language course, a so-called LSP (language for specific purpose) course, and my original intention was primarily to apply the insights gained from the research directly into the improvement of the course. But unfortunately due to some unforeseen circumstances, not very long after this work is to be completed this course will no longer be run because of the closedown of the department where it is provided. However, it doesn't mean that the effort that goes into this research work is to be wasted. Personally, this has been a very valuable experience, through which I have benefited not only in terms of enrichment in understanding of the issues concerned, but also in terms of broadening personal world outlooks.

Moreover, the results of the research may have wider implications, as although this study is tailored specifically for the particular course and therefore both its scope and scale are in some respects limited, yet some of the issues that it attempts to address are common concerns of many who are involved in studies on intercultural communication, intercultural training and education, and therefore may add, no matter how little, to the understanding of such issues like: developing intercultural communicative competence, a term that I will explain in detail later, and intercultural competence through sojourn experience; empirical approaches to assessing intercultural competence or intercultural experience; comparative cultural studies on different communication styles; and also further development of intercultural communicative competence for those who already have considerable experience of the target language and culture, such as having spent some time studying or working in the target cultural environment. Moreover, it may to some degree provide a reference for similar courses in any language, i.e., business language learning courses, as they may have some similar objectives for learning and similar issues to deal with, such as the social contexts of the communication, the kind of language register applied, and more importantly, different concepts and behaviours between cultures concerning business or work. So, although it

is no longer feasible to apply the outcomes of the study directly to its intended course, nevertheless, this study will not be in vain.

In short, the thesis has several aims of different levels of generality:

- to develop a more refined understanding of the purposes of language teaching and learning in a context of globalisation
- to use a specific case study as a basis for developing that understanding
- to assess learners' cultural learning within the case study
- and in order to do the latter, to propose a mode of assessment as an original contribution to the debate on assessment of intercultural competence.

To achieve these aims, the following discussion will first take a close look at various studies relevant to the case, and then carry out a detailed examination of the case on that basis. The following discussion will try to answer these questions:

- First, what educational objectives does a language learning course need to fulfil in terms of cultural learning?
- Second, from the perspective of business professions what is deemed necessary or important to know about different cultures for the purpose of carrying out successful intercultural business operation or work effectively globally? Is this compatible with the educational objectives of language and cultural learning? Moreover, does the business Chinese language course address adequately the development of such a competence?
- Thirdly, what is the student's level of intercultural competence before taking the course and how to assess it?
- Finally, what are the implications of the research for the improvement of the course in particular, and an LSP course in general?

1.2. The Context of the Study

This is a case study of a small scale, and as I mentioned above, the intention was to investigate from a language and cultural integrated learning perspective how to facilitate the learner to develop the abilities required by the changing society through a specialised language course. In order to explain how the study is structured and conducted, it is necessary to introduce briefly the learner, the course, and the issues that I intended to look into.

The course concerned is a business Chinese language course offered in a UK university mainly to students of Chinese who have already acquired an intermediate level of Chinese language proficiency through two years of study on a four-year university degree course in Chinese studies, including one year study abroad in China in the second year of the degree. The business language course is offered to the students in their third and/or fourth year, that is, after their returning from their one-year-abroad study in China, they can choose to take stage I of the course for only one year or both stages I and II for two years. In this context, what to expect of the learner in terms of linguistic competence is rather clear prior to their taking the course. However, it is not clear what to expect of them in terms of the competence in handling intercultural communications, except an assumption that since they have been able to cope, to whatever degree, with their life and study during their year in China, and that they have already had two years of experience of the language and the culture, they must have managed to build up a competence that has enabled them to cope in some degree with various challenges in their cross-cultural experiences. So if it is to be one of the main aims of the course to promote the development of intercultural competence or intercultural communicative competence, there are a few questions that need to be answered first. To begin with, what has the student learnt in terms of the competence for intercultural communication before entering the course, and what problems have they encountered in handling communications with culturally different others, especially with members of the target culture group? Secondly, what do they perceive as necessary for their further development? But more importantly perhaps, apart from the learner factor, what should be and can be expected as the outcomes of the learning both from the perspective of theory and practicality?

As the name suggests, the course is about cross-cultural business communication. The content of learning contains some topics and vocabulary that are highly specialised, representing the universality of some international business practice and procedures. However, as I am going to argue later in Chapter 4, although international business practice and procedures are highly formulated, the way people perceive and conduct business differs from culture to culture, and therefore it is important to reflect in the learning the impact of cultural differences on how people communicate meanings. The problem is that having to observe the same standardised rules and regulations and to follow the same required procedures and norms in doing business or work across cultures does not mean that the same values and interpretations of behaviours are

recognised and accepted universally. As will be shown in our discussion, even the concept of business itself does not mean exactly the same thing in different cultures. So, unless people are aware of this, misunderstanding and dysfunctions are inevitable. But to be able to provide useful help for the learner in their development of the competence to communicate and to work effectively in an intercultural context it is necessary not only to have a good idea of what the learner has acquired already in terms of competence, but also to know what is deemed necessary or important from the perspective of those who are involved in across-cultural business practices. Only on the basis of such understanding, is it possible to set meaningful and realistic objectives and to build appropriate contents for the learning.

This study is partly inspired by what the writer had learnt through some personal experience about the anxieties, concerns, and misunderstandings that occurred in the process of business co-operations between some UK firms and their Chinese partners. For example, due to some different ideas about hospitality or codes of courtesy, some Chinese visitors or delegations felt that they were not received as warmly by their hosts as they had expected or that their kind considerations were sometimes not being reciprocated. On the other hand, some British business people were overwhelmed with gratitude and excitement by the way they were treated in China, but at the same time felt frustrated due to the relative slower pace and sometimes a lack of clear regulations at work. Some joint ventures experienced conflicts in management due to cultural misunderstandings, and some companies hesitated to enter the Chinese market because of concerns about the implications of the differences in social systems and laws and regulations, and also interferences from the authorities. These bring out the point that to be successful in business or work-related communications requires more than professional knowledge and linguistic competence. It follows that to be part of preparation for people to work in an intercultural or cross-cultural context a business language course needs to take into consideration the cultural environment of the social interactions and address the issues that concern those who work cross-culturally.

An important part of this investigation is to assess the level of intercultural competence that the student has developed prior to entering the course, especially through their sojourn experience in China, which typically consists of some work experience in Beijing. The investigation thereby makes a meaningful contribution to the difficult issue of assessment of intercultural competence and experience.

In one way or anther, almost all the students can find some work to do in Beijing for experience during their one year stay there, some involved in teaching, some in business; some working in multinational organisations, and some in Chinese organisations. This obviously broadens their scope of social access, and enables them to have some first-hand experience of cross-cultural interactions at the workplace. The sojourn experience thus provides the opportunity for them to observe the culture and interact with host members in wider social contexts, and therefore enables them to gain better insight into the ways host members think and behave, including work-related behaviours and their underlying values and beliefs. At the same time, such an experience could possibly encourage a reflection upon their own culture vis-à-vis the other culture/s, and thus increase their cultural awareness. As can be seen later, the sojourn experience, especially the work experience in China proves to be a rich cultural learning source. It is self evident that the learner's perspectives and experience have to be taken into account when deciding what to do for learning, and therefore assessment of the level of competence of the students in handling intercultural communication is a key factor in considering issues about competence development.

1.3. The Structure and the Formation of the Theoretical Framework of the Study

As indicated above, this research work can be perceived as containing mainly two parts, searching for new understanding of and approach for language teaching and learning in general and the business language teaching and learning in particular on the one hand, and trying to map the competence of the student in terms of managing intercultural communication on the other hand. The former forms the basis for the latter, providing conceptual framework for interpreting and assessing the student's experience. That is to say, the study logically starts with a search for the theoretical and practical basis for setting up learning objectives. In this regard, given the nature of the learning – a formal educational program for a specific subject of learning – it is necessary that both the overall educational aims and the specific learning requirements for the subject matter are to be addressed. This basically means that apart from the general educational aims for language and cultural learning, it is also necessary to take into account the specific features of intercultural business communication in setting the targets for the learning, which will be discussed in Chapter 4. When this framework is established, the next step it to collect information from the students and analyse it accordingly.

The data collection focuses largely on the student sojourn experience in China, including their work experience, and it pays a lot of attention to their general attitudes towards and abilities in managing intercultural communication. To be more specific, it addresses issues such as how they interacted with host members, how they perceived their management of their intercultural experience and the host culture vis-à-vis their own culture, and their views about intercultural communication in general.

Given the context of this study, which involves several issues, namely, language education, sojourn experience, business communication, and competences assessment, the theories and conceptual assumptions that underpin the study come directly or indirectly from the research relevant to these issues. But they can be broadly seen as from two categories of studies: one about social science mainly, such as communication studies, social psychology, comparative cultural studies, etc., and the other on language and cultural education. In regard to the former, the concepts that are relevant to this study include intercultural competence, communication styles, cultural identity and intercultural interactions, cross-cultural adjustment or adaptation, and so on. It is worth noting here that the study draws upon the theoretical concepts of psychological and social adjustments or adaptation in analysing the data, mainly because the student's sojourn experience is taken as the major source of information for understanding their intercultural experience. Besides, psychological and social adaptabilities are important aspects of intercultural competence.

The reason for focusing mainly on the sojourn experience is that it provides good access to the information about how the students respond both emotionally and behaviourally to the challenges of intercultural interactions, and more importantly, it includes their experience of intercultural or multi-cultural workplace, which concerns one of the key aspects of this research: cultural differences in terms of concepts of and behaviours related to work. Thus how they coped with their work experiences and their views on work-related behaviours, etc. will provide good insights into both the issue of their development of intercultural competence and the issue of language learning for business purposes.

The latter category, theories and studies on language and cultural education, as I shall show in our later discussion, draws upon the above mentioned social studies as well as having its roots firmly grounded in linguistic and education studies. Thus language teaching and learning issue are addressed from a broad perspective, where

language learning is perceived not only as the acquisition of the skills to communicate meanings with culturally different others, which, of course, is essential for effective intercultural or cross-cultural socialisation, but also as an important means to develop the attitude and competence to co-work and co-live with people of different cultural backgrounds, which entails a profound understanding of social justice, social equality, and social responsibility.

The studies from the former category enable us to understand better such issues as verbal and non-verbal behaviours, the impact of cultural differences on perceptions, relationships and behaviours, and the process of intercultural communication and cross-cultural adaptation. The studies from the second category on the other hand provide us with new insights into the issues such as the roles and the aims of language teaching and learning, and the implications of the new perspectives to pedagogical issues. Together they direct the research by linking the ideological principles to individual development in perceptions and behaviours.

1.4. Assessing the Students' Intercultural Experiences – Data Collection

As suggested above, assessment of the students' intercultural experiences forms an important part of this study. It should reveal information about the ways the students perceived and interacted with their new cultural environment as well as the relevance of their experience to what would be expected for work in a multicultural or cross-cultural workplace. The shift of the focus of this study means however, instead of just being an important part of the course design, assessing the level of intercultural competence that the student gained from their sojourn experience is now the major focus of this work.

It is expected that the sojourn experience would enable the student to gain a lot of insights into the target culture as well as to develop the competence to manage the challenges that a sojourner has to face, such as communication difficulties, anxiety and uncertainty caused by change of cultural environment, and so on. But to be able to address the issue of further development in competence or to have a clear view of in what way/s the sojourn experiences were beneficial to their development of intercultural competence it is necessary to take a close look into what they encountered and how they managed in regard to living and working in the new cultural environment. Because only by doing so is it possible to find out the cognitive and behavioural changes that they went through. To do this I conducted two questionnaires and an interview so as to get relatively sufficient information about their experiences in China.

The following presumptions about the outcomes of the sojourn experience formed the basis for my design of questionnaires and interviews:

1. Having the opportunity to observe closely the social structures and the ways people there live and work, the student will be able to obtain considerable sociocultural knowledge of the host culture, and that will enable them to empathise with the ways the host members think and behave, and consequently to be more willing and capable in socialising with host members.

2. Through interactions with host members the student will learn a lot about the social rules and norms practised in the host society and some of the underlying values and beliefs. Yet they may still have a lot of difficulties in understanding the different communication styles and some deeply rooted value orientations, such as collectivism vs. individualism, power distance, etc., which will inevitably impede them from accurately interpreting the other's intentions and meanings as well as expressing theirs, and that could cause misunderstanding and conflicts.

3. Through the work experience, either in a Chinese or a multicultural environment, the student has the opportunity to observe workplace behaviours and therefore will develop an awareness of the impact of cultural differences on work and workplace behaviours, including different attitudes and approaches to work, cross-cultural relationship, work ethos, etc.

4. Being immersed in a Chinese environment, they will have opportunities to observe and practise Chinese language in various social contexts, and this will be a great help to their development in intercultural communicative competence, the competence to make effective and appropriate use of linguistic resources to achieve communicational purposes.

1.5. Assessing the Students' Intercultural Experiences – the Assessment Tool

Formal or informal, formative or summative, in whatever forms, assessment plays a key role in all sorts of teaching/learning activities, providing important information to all those concerned about things like progress and effectiveness of teaching/learning, be it an individual or a group, be it a particular method of teaching/learning or some particular learning content, or an individual's management of teaching/learning, etc. Naturally, assessment of the development of the competence for intercultural communication or interaction, in one way or another, has to be an important part of a

teaching/learning endeavour if it is one of the learning objectives to develop such a competence. But given that culture is an extremely broad concept, and that the constructs of intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence, which I will discuss in detail in Chapter 3, are complex and difficult to pin down exactly, accurate assessment of such competences is, understandably, a very difficult issue.

However, constant efforts have been made in finding better ways to deal with it and various methods and tools have been developed. It can be found in literature that different approaches have been taken from various perspectives to assess or evaluate intercultural experiences and the competences. For example, some research approaches this issue from behavioural aspect of communication competence (e.g. Ruben and Kealey, 1979), some from the aspect of social and psychological adjustments in new cultural environment (e.g. Caligiuri *et al.*, 2000; Matsumoto *et al.*, 2001; 2003), and some from the aspect of cognitive development (Bennett, 1993; Hammer *et al.*, 2003). Another approach is to tackle the issue in a manner that is more all-inclusive, trying to be more explicit about the relations between the different components of the competence for intercultural communication (Byram, 1997a; INCA Project, 2005).

There has also been a lot of effort in developing different methods of assessment. Thus apart from commonly adopted means like survey, test, etc., some novel methods have been developed such as portfolio assessment (Jacobson *et al.*, 1999; Toll, 2000), critical text analysis, and combination of questionnaire, role play and scenario for assessing intercultural communicative competence (INCA Project, 2005). Nonetheless, each approach and method has its own focus and thus limitations.

For the purpose of understanding in what ways and to what extent the students benefited from their sojourn experience and the possible direction/s of their further development in terms of competence for intercultural communication, it is necessary to get detailed information about their experience so as to find out what facilitated or hampered their communication with host members, or more generally, intercultural encounters. To achieve this end, the assessment needs to include not only what they did, but also why and how they did what they did, that is, to examine both the cognitive and behavioural aspects of their experience. Also, having the intention to address the issue of further development, it is more than desirable to be able to have some ideas of the level of progression of the students in the process of becoming interculturally competent. With these considerations, I have chosen to use two models as the tool for data

assessment. One is the Intercultural Communicative Competence Model developed by Byram, threshold criteria for developing intercultural communicative competence, and the other is Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, a model that attempts to address the issue of progression. I am attracted to these two models mainly because together they can provide a wider perspective: the former enables a detailed examination of the different aspects of an individual's competence, while the latter offers a progressive perspective.

There are some distinctive differences between the two. Bennett's model is presented as phenomenological – a description of the different ways in which people respond to cultural differences. But more importantly, the different ways in responding to otherness or cultural difference, according to Bennett, represent a progressive change, or "a continuum of increasing sophistication in dealing with cultural differences" (Bennett, 1993:22). The key concept that underpins the model is *intercultural sensitivity*, which is defined as the way people construe cultural difference, and the basic assumption is that the more able one is in differentiating cultural differences, the more effective he/she will be in managing intercultural communication or encounters. As a phenomenological model, it is supposed to represent the general tendency of how people move from stage to stage in their journey of becoming intercultural competent. On the other hand, as a descriptive model, it is likely to be restricted to what is available for observation. Also, as the model is built predominantly on the basis of cognitive development, sensitivity to cultural differences, it is thus not always easy to distinguish the different aspects of the development, i.e., attitude, knowledge, and behaviour.

Byram's ICC model, on the other hand, is presented as a prescriptive model, which takes explicitly into account the educational objectives of intercultural learning as well as the requirements that are specific to intercultural competence development. Situated in the realm of language and cultural education, this model sets explicit criteria for an *intercultural speaker*, the one who has both the desire and competence to communicate with people of various cultural backgrounds, which is perceived as a main target for foreign/second language teaching and learning. As mentioned above, in contrast to the developmental model, this is set as a threshold of the intercultural communicative competence development. Another difference is that, designed as a guide for teaching and learning practice, this model sets out clearly defined criteria and makes distinctions of development in attitude, knowledge, and behaviour. It thus helps to identify causes of problems more easily. Moreover, the ICC model puts clear

emphasis on the development of critical cultural awareness, which has significant educational values. I hope by applying the two models I will be able to take a wider perspective in assessing the data.

1.6. The Layout of the Thesis

The thesis consists of eight chapters. The current one, Chapter 1 gives a general introduction about the aims, the background, and the structure of this work. In Chapter 2 I will discuss the issues of intercultural communication and sojourn, and then in Chapter 3 I will look into the theories and problems of developing intercultural competence or intercultural communicative competence, where the concept of competence and issues such as education will be dealt with. Chapter 4 is devoted to the issues concerning assessment of intercultural competence, discussing the problems involved and introducing the assessment tools and their strengths and weaknesses. These three chapters form the theoretical framework for the empirical investigation. In Chapter 5 methodological issues are dealt with, where I will explain the procedures and the methods used for data collection. Chapter 6 is made up of five individual case analyses, which presents in detail what development these individuals made in terms of attitude, knowledge and skills, and what may be still desired. A cross-board analysis of all the information gathered, including the five cases, is made in Chapter 7 with the intention to reach some tentative views of the common features and tendencies of the development of intercultural competence in the given context. Finally, a conclusion is made in Chapter 8.

Chapter Two

Intercultural Communication and Sojourn

Research shows that sojourn experience is typically replete with cognitive difficulties, which is often referred as 'culture shock' (Argyle, 1982; Furnham and Bochner, 1982), a notion that conveys the meaning of cross-cultural interactions being anxiety inducing. A major cause of the anxiety, however, is believed to be a lack of social skills to communicate and interact effectively with members of a host culture, and therefore the process of overcoming this emotional discomfort is basically a process of developing the skills to manage life and work in a new cultural environment, which, according to Hammer *et al.*, involves: "(a) ability to deal with psychological stress, (b) ability to communicate effectively, and (c) ability to establish interpersonal relations." (quoted in Argyle, 1982:62) In the sense that the abilities to manage relationships and emotions are closely related to, or rather dependent on, the ability to communicate and interact with others, developing intercultural communication skills is at the centre of the issue of intercultural interactions. (Argyle, 1982) With this assumption, I will explore in this chapter how intercultural interactions are affected by the knowledge and skills to communicate cross-culturally, which will provide the key to understand the students' sojourn experience in terms of intercultural competence development. In the following I will first look briefly into the relationship between sojourn experience and intercultural communication and then focus on the issues related to the latter.

But before starting the discussion, it is necessary to clarify some of the terms and constructs applied in this writing. First of all, a distinction is made between the terms 'cross-cultural' and 'intercultural' in general, where 'cross-cultural' is used in a context of interactions between two specific cultures, while 'intercultural' in a context which is multicultural or non-cultural specific. But sometimes 'cross-cultural' is also used in a more general term, referring to interactions between any two cultures. Next, the terms of 'communication' and 'interaction' are sometimes used interchangeably to refer to interactive behaviours, although generally there is a distinction between the two, where communication carries the meaning of conveying information, while interaction refers more widely to any interactive activities. Furthermore, there is a need to explain the term 'adaptation' used in this writing. To begin with, for some researchers, especially those in the field of psychology, there is a distinction between psychological adaptation or adjustment and social adaptation (Ward *et al.* 2001), but the meaning adopted in this

writing is that from Kim, i.e., including both psychological adjustment and social integration/adaptation (2002). Then, there is a difference between researchers in conceptualising adaptation as a stage of development or a general process of development. Bennett, for instance, conceptualised adaptation as a certain stage of intercultural competence development in his Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1993). But to others, adaptation means the whole process of acculturation (e.g. Weaver, 1993; Ward *et al.*, 2001; Kim, 2002). For instance, for Kim it "refers to the dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to an unfamiliar cultural environment, establish (or re-establish) and maintain a relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationship with the environment" (2002:260). In this writing I will distinguish the two constructs by referring to Bennett's stage of development with italics so as to avoid confusion.

2.1. Communicating Across Cultures – a Major Challenge for Sojourners

Literature shows that much of our present day understanding of intercultural communication and interaction is owed to the efforts that the researchers made in the early second half of the last century in searching for answers to the problems that sojourners encounter in another cultural environment. To unravel the problem of what prevented many sojourners, e.g. volunteers from the Peace Corps, staff from business organisations, foreign students, etc. to complete their overseas assignments or to meet their intended goals, these researchers looked deep into the issue of how cultural differences impact on individuals' cognitive and behavioural responses to their new environment. (Furnham and Bochner, 1982) Thanks to their work, people now have much better ideas of what are the likely challenges for sojourners and what sort of knowledge and skills would be needed in coping with the challenges.

The notion of culture shock is introduced by Oberg to conceptualise what is commonly experienced by sojourners, "the state of acute anxiety produced by unfamiliar social norms and social signals" (quoted in Argyle, 1982:62). According to social psychology studies, change of cultural environment leads to emotional reactions of individuals, that vary from "mild emotional disorders and stress-related physiological ailments to psychosis" (Weaver, 1993), which in turn affect people's performance in work or study. The emotional difficulties are believed to be largely the consequence of not being able to function effectively in another cultural environment, including, importantly, not having the competence to interact or communicate with host members.

Taking the view that social interactions are skilled social performance, and that cultures differ significantly in terms of behavioural rules and norms, thus requiring different skills, Argyle and Kendon (REF) suggest a social skills approach to solve sojourners problems. This has encouraged a lot of research on how to address social inadequacy (Furnham and Bochner, 1982), and has led to much better understanding of intercultural behaviours and interactions.

With the understanding that culture shock is not a psychological sickness, but a consequence of mismatch between person and environment, this learning approach addresses the issue of cross-cultural encounter from a social behavioural perspective, emphasising interpersonal phenomena such as personal relationships, social identities, and verbal and non-verbal behaviours. With the view that social interactions are skilled social performance, and that the performance is mutually organised by the participants (Ward *et al.*, 2001:51), this approach stresses the point that to be effective in social interactions, individuals have to have sufficient mastery of interpersonal skills. Based on this view, to be able to communicate or interact effectively with members of other cultures one has to acquire the social skills that are recognisable and acceptable to his/her interlocutors. This cultural learning approach not only addresses cross-cultural experience as a dynamic interactive process where culture is dealt with at a person-to-person level, but also emphasises learning new knowledge and skills required by the new social context, including the social norms, and the values and beliefs of the other culture/s. This process of adapting to a new cultural system is often referred to as the process of acculturation or adaptation. (Kim, 2002; Ward *et al.*, 2001)

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, right at the centre of the cultural learning approach is the issue of communication skills, which inevitably affect one's abilities in managing relationships and emotions, and this will become evident in our later discussion. According to Ward *et al.* (2001), one of the theoretical underpinnings of this approach comes from the studies concerning intercultural communication competence, and the other from studies in regard to interpersonal behaviour and social learning, which were briefly discussed just above. As pointed out by Argyle (1982), intercultural social interactions and communication are affected by differences in several main areas: language, non-verbal communication, rules of social situations, social relationships, motivation, and concepts and ideology, to understand developing inter- or cross- cultural communication competence it is necessary to look deep into

these areas. In the following I will discuss in detail the concept of intercultural communication and how cultures differ in communication behaviours.

2.2. Intercultural Communication – General Perspective

The discussion in this section will start with a general review of the basic concept of intercultural communication. It will then be followed by a discussion on verbal and non-verbal communication, how meaning is generated, and the impact of identity on perception of meaning and social relation. This will provide an overview of what happens during the process of communication.

2.2.1. General Concept of Intercultural Communication

The basic concept of intercultural communication is defined by Gudykunst in a very general way as "communication between people from different national cultures, and many scholars limit it to face-to-face communication." (2002b:179) As will become evident in the following discuss, communication between people from different national cultures is a very complex social phenomenon, which is characterised with pitfalls of misunderstanding and conflicts. But first of all, it is useful to have a brief discussion about intercultural communication conducted in a manner other than face-to-face interaction.

The emphasis on the interactive aspect of intercultural communication studies can be seen clearly from a comment by Rogers and Hart: "The unit of analysis in ICC (Intercultural Communication. Note added) is typically the interpersonal dyad." (2002:2) It is also evident from the research documents on intercultural communication that a lot of efforts have been devoted to studying direct interpersonal communication, such as overseas success (e.g. Brislin, 1981; Ruben and Kealey, 1979), speech accommodation (e.g. Giles and Smith, 1979), communication accommodation (e.g. Giles *et al.*, 1987), cross-cultural adaptation (Kim, 2002), cross-cultural contact and psychological adjustment (Bochner, 1982; Ward *et al.*, 2001), etc. However, this does not mean intercultural communication has to be face-to-face. There are obvious evidences that the studies on intercultural communication are not restricted to this mode. For instance, the recognition of a wider range of intercultural communication activities can be seen from this remark by Barnett:

> .....intercultural communication occurs on many levels (Smith, 1999), such as via mediated communication. Individuals' uncertainty about other cultures that they will never visit is reduced by reading or seeing films and videos about other

> cultures and by listening to recordings produced by members of other cultural groups. (2002:276)

If communication is understood as direct interactive activities in exchange of information, activities such as reading, seeing films, listening to recordings do not seem to fit in with the perception of communication as a two-way interaction, with which the term communication is often seen to be associated. However, if communication is seen from a wider perspective – as being a process of information transmission between communicator/s and recipient/s, it is obvious then that a form of communication is taking place in such activities as reading, seeing films, watching TV, etc. Through these activities information, such as views, behaviours between individuals and between people and environment, etc., is conveyed and received, with the sender's purposes and views presented, consciously or unconsciously, to the recipient.

Clearly, such mediated communication is different from the directly interactive mode, as it is not paramount for the message sender and the recipient to have adequate interpersonal skills for face-to-face interactions, and they are not directly exposed to the complexity of intercultural contexts of communication. Furthermore, they are not under pressure for immediate response. But this mediated communication requires also the knowledge and skills to interpret information that is conveyed with different cultural perspectives, the willingness to accept different views and perceptions, as well as the sensitivity in dealing with the differences (Byram, 1997a).

Communication through the internet, according to Barnett, is a form of mediated communication that is fast gaining importance in cross-cultural communication. In his view, as the World Wide Web is gaining ever more importance in communication between people all over the world, "interpersonal communication will be increasingly computer mediated" (2002:276). With the development of IT technology, it is getting easier for information to flow worldwide, and inevitably more and more people will find themselves encountering different cultures in their on-line communication. To convey and retrieve meaning that is produced with different frames of reference, people have to learn the skills to negotiate meanings as well as to be able to be tolerant of ambiguity and uncertainty.

Although communication through means such as e-mail is different from face-to-face interaction, it, however, can be, and often is, a two-way communication. Apparently, cooperation from both sides is required in order to achieve common goals, and that obviously entails the competence to communicate with culturally different

others in cross-cultural contexts. It is clear then that computer mediated intercultural communication is more complicated than simply receiving or sending information. It requires the abilities to interpret and convey meaning from a perspective that is beyond one's usual cultural confinement and the flexibility to handle effectively potential social dysfunctions, a point that will be discuss in full when it comes to the topic of intercultural communicative competence development. It is sufficient to say at this point that intercultural communication involves more than face-to-face communication.

The position taken here is that as face-to-face communication is but one form of communication and that ever increasingly more people are communicating across cultures in various ways either for business purposes, or for study, or for recreation or other purposes, it is necessary that all the different forms be taken into account. From a language teaching and learning perspective, the abilities to handle written texts are equally important as those required for oral communication. Below the discussion will be focused on what happens during the process of intercultural communication.

2.2.2. Communication between People from Different Cultural Backgrounds

Communication between people from different cultural backgrounds is far more complex than communication between members of the same cultural group. Unlike intra-group communication, where people share the same membership and the same meaning system, which provides clear guidance with regard to social relationships and verbal and non-verbal behaviours, communication across cultures poses challenges to individuals both cognitively and affectively. Research on issues such as cross-cultural communication and interaction, social psychology, etc. reveals that the process of information processing is deeply influenced by how people perceive the relationships between themselves and their interlocutors, and therefore intercultural communication suffers not only from a lack of familiarity with another meaning system, but also a tendency for mis-attribution. (e.g. Jaspars and Hewstone, 1982; Tajfel, 1981)

According to Ting-Toomey, "the degree of difference that exists between individuals is derived primarily from cultural group membership factors such as beliefs, values, norms and interaction scripts". (1999:16) These differences set apart the members of different cultural groups as each culture has formed its own way of making sense of the world, and to communicate across cultures means primarily to overcome the cognitive barriers. For example, it is believed that members from what are called individualistic cultures tend to act in a more person-oriented manner, while members

from what is termed collectivistic cultures tend to act in a more group-oriented way. (Hofstede, 1980; 1998; Triandis, 2003) Problems thus often occur in cross-cultural communication due to our failure to appreciate fully how our perception and cognition is shaped by our culture framework. This will be clear in our following discussion.

Studies show that intercultural communication is affected by various factors including communication purpose, social context, social identities and social relationships, as well as social conventions (e.g. Gumperz, 1982; McCann and Higgins, 1990; Gudykunst and Gumbs, 1989; Gudykunst, 1998; Ting-Toomey, 1999). In other words, apart from the more obvious obstacles, such as linguistic and non-verbal behavioural differences, communicating meaning across cultures is also affected by other less visible factors: different values and beliefs, different relational and role expectations, and cultural identity related behaviours such as stereotypes, ethnocentrism, etc. that people tend to engage in towards culturally different others. All these would make it hard for culturally different individuals to perceive accurately the intentions, attitudes, and ultimately meanings in their interactions, and consequently reduce their abilities to respond effectively.

2.2.3. Verbal and Non-verbal Behaviour

The importance of language in communication is self-evident. It is hard to imagine that one could communicate effectively beyond very basic level without making use of language. Language is a very sophisticated medium with which people express their thoughts, feelings, and emotions, and with which people cooperate with each other to achieve various social goals. To put it differently, language enables us to gather information from each other, to exchange ideas, to relate to each other, and to cooperate and function effectively in our life. Unfortunately, each cultural group develops its own language system, which, while enabling its members to share their experiences and to cooperate, excludes members from other groups. As each language system is unique in terms of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, the differences make cross-culture communication very difficult indeed. The difficulty, however, lies not only in the linguistic system itself, but also, perhaps more importantly in regard to cross-culture communication, in the way meaning is communicated in accordance with social contexts.

What is meant by this is that each culture has its own rules and conventions in regard to when to say what to whom and how. For instance, traditionally students from

some East Asian countries tend to listen to their teachers rather than to actively engage in discussions as that is the expected behaviour. People with different cultural frameworks are accustomed to different social pragmatics, and therefore misperception of meanings would occur when the two sides of the communication are ignorant of each other's cultural norms. Researches show that in some cultures people tend to be direct in their verbal messages while in others indirectness is preferred (e.g. Hara and Kim, 2004; Ting-Toomey, 1999); and some cultures emphasise verbal-based understanding, while others are more context-based (Hall, 1977). It is evident that without an understanding of this, a communication breakdown is inevitable between members of different cultural groups. I will discuss this in more detail later. But first a few words will be said bout non-verbal communication.

Everyone can tell intuitively the importance of non-verbal behaviour, including paralanguage (Street, 1990) in interpersonal communication, although intuition does not provide sound explanations to the issues such as the role of non-verbal behaviour in interpersonal communication, its functions in meaning exchange, and its relationship with verbal communication. However, from research on non-verbal communication (e.g. Argyle, 1982; Hall, 1977; Patterson, 1990; Andersen *et al.*, 2002; Matsumoto *et al.*, 2002), which has provided both theoretical explanations and empirical data, one can find a lot about its roles in communication.

Patterson has done a detailed research on functions of non-verbal behaviour and proposed that apart from providing information, regulating interaction and expressing intimacy, which were identified by earlier research, further four features can be added: social control, presenting identities and images, affect management, and facilitating service and task goals (1990). He emphasises that non-verbal behaviour is deliberately used sometimes by communicators to manage interactions, particularly when there is a feeling of the need to exercise social control or to present identities and images (1990:105). Some other research has been done more specifically on the aspect of cultural influence on non-verbal communication. For example, Matsumoto *et al.*'s study (2002) of cultural influence on the expression and perception of emotions suggests that the way people express and perceive emotions is to some extent shaped by their culture norms, although people from different cultures have a lot in common in regard to emotional expressions.

There are some attempts to explicate the link between the operations of verbal and non-verbal behaviour by examining the meaning production process. In their research on the structure and organisation of verbal and non-verbal behaviour, Cappella and Palmer looked into the issue of "the clustering of verbal and non-verbal behaviors" (1990:158). In this initial research on patterns of covariations among verbal and non-verbal behaviours, they suggest that there indeed exists a correlation between the two, although the data they accumulated was not yet complete enough to give a full view of how production and perception of meaning is structured and organised. Their approach to the issue of generation and perception of verbal and non-verbal behaviours, known as encoding and decoding, suggests that both verbal and non-verbal behaviours are the outcomes of the same process, and that they can be treated with a same approach.

From a different perspective, research has been done to understand the impact of cultural differences on meaning production and perception, both verbal and non-verbal. For instance, following Hall's contextual approach to communication studies (1977) and Hofstede's value orientation approach (1980), many studies have compared verbal and/or non-verbal behaviours between/across cultures. For example, incorporating Hall's theory of high- and low- context and Hofstede's four cultural dimensions, the recent work by Andersen *et al.* (2002) on non-verbal communication across cultures used six cultural dimensions to classify non-verbal behaviours, i.e., immediacy, individualism-collectivism, gender, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and high and low context. All these studies have helped to explain how communication is affected by cultural differences and to bring both verbal and non-verbal behaviour under the same framework.

I will leave the issue of verbal and non-verbal behaviour at this point, and the purpose of the above discussion is to make the point that our communicational behaviours are guided by our cultural frameworks and that both the operations of verbal and non-verbal behaviours are influenced by the same process of information processing. With this understanding, I will then shift the focus of discussion to the process of information processing. The phrase "communication behaviour" will be used in the following, which subsumes both verbal and non-verbal means of interpersonal communication. Language behaviour will be discussed again later when the issue of language education is to be discussed.

2.2.4. Where Does Meaning Come From?

Where is meaning generated from? What is the impact of cultural differences on the process of meaning production and interpretation? First of all, let's take a look at how communication behaviours are operated and where meaning is generated from, and then the impact of cultural differences on communication styles.

Meaning production, according to Gudykunst (1998), is based on three sources: habits, intentions, and emotions. Habits are referred to as the behavioural patterns individuals follow without conscious decisions being made about what to do, as in the words of Gudykunst: "When we are communicating habitually, we are following scripts" (1998:10). These 'scripts' are the structure of knowledge in terms of social behaviour (Van Dijk, 1990) that individuals have accumulated through socialisation. What is significant about this habitual behaviour is that "the cultural scripts we enact provide us with shared interpretations of our behaviours" (Gudykunst, 1998:11). It is the sharedness that enables us to make sense of others' behaviours and to expect to be understood by others. It is only through this sharedness that culture could exist.

But how people communicate is not only based on their knowledge of what behaviour is required of a given situation or a given role; it is also based on what they intend to achieve – one of the three sources behavioural operation is based on. In social interactions, people make decisions on what behavioural actions to take in order to achieve intended purposes. For example, in their Speech Accommodation Theory, Giles and colleagues "proposed that speakers use linguistic strategies to gain approval or to show distinctiveness in their interaction with others" (Gudykunst, 2002c:187-8). People can make use of various linguistic devices, as well as non-verbal cues, to show convergence or divergence (Giles and Smith, 1979) in their communication process. Thus, through behaviours information such as attitude, motivation is conveyed, either intentionally or unintentionally. Conversely, the recipient of the message will also have to assess the other's attitudes and intentions in his/her process of information decoding. As mentioned earlier, we all make use of non-verbal cues as well as verbal ones, to indicate our intentions and to judge others'.

But to be able to do this, there must be first of all, a common consensus of meaning that serves to link individuals' subjective intentions with different social phenomena or episodes of social behaviours. That is to say, although how individuals interpret, or judge a social situation is by nature subjective, nevertheless, their

interpretation has to be based on social conventions – the commonly accepted interpretation of the situation. In his recent book *Consciousness and Language*, Searle (2002) argues from the perspective of speech act theory that it is the social phenomena that form the conditions for individuals to realise their intentions in communication, because only when there exists a prior agreement of meaning can individuals expect their expressions of intentions to be taken, or to be understood by others. The interdependent relationship between the factors of habits and intention can be seen from a comment by Searle: "Assuming that the social phenomena form the conditions of possibility of speech acts, then on this conception, the social-conventional aspects of language do not *replace* individual intentionality, but rather that intentionality is only able to function against the *presupposition* of social rules, conventions, and practices." (2002:150-1)

The third operational factor of the three is emotions. Emotions in this context reflect how individuals feel affectively about the change of situation (Gudykunst, 1998), which is defined by Detweiler *et al.* (1983) as: "The language, behavior, body language, attitudes, climate, geography, responses to authority, and so on, of another culture all serve as situational influences on the individual." (1983:104) In all likelihood, intercultural communication would result in more emotional responses, as change of situation could be more dramatic and more frequent. For instance, difficulties caused by the linguistic barrier, or social or natural environment often result in frustration, confusion and uncertainty known as culture shock. However, as shown below, issues concerning social identities and intergroup relations in intercultural interaction are inherently more emotionally challenging.

Having made the point that communicational behaviour is regulated by the interplay of the factors of social situation, communication purpose and affective response, I now come to examine what happens to individuals during the process of information processing, and how this process is affected by cultural differences.

2.2.5. Process of Meaning Production – Perception and Production of Meaning

According to McCann and Higgins (1990) the fast development in social cognition studies since the 1970s has greatly enriched our understanding of how meaning is constructed and perceived in social interactions. They pointed out that with the traditional approach the emphasis of research on communicating meaning is placed on message transmission and the recipients, and "message recipients were treated as

relatively passive participants who served mainly as targets for the communicative activity of the speakers" (1990:23). Thus, much attention is directed at social settings, purpose of communication and personal traits, etc., which are thought to be relatively stable. From this perspective, communication is viewed "as a static and linear process, and this tends to highlight the impact of the message on the target or recipient" (1990:19). In contrast to this, the approach of social cognition emphasises the dynamic interactive nature of communication, hence attention is also paid to the impact on communication development of personal constructs, communicators' perception of the situations that they are in, and their purposes etc. In criticising the traditional approach, McCann and Higgins made this point:

> What has not been considered in any detail is how communicators make inferences about the relative success or failure of their attempts, what adjustments they make for unsuccessful attempts and the extent to which these adjustments may vary according to the communicator's goals (e.g. persuasion, impression management, task, etc.), type of recipient or the nature of their relationship. (1990:25)

It can be seen from this observation that what is thought to be missing in the traditional approach is a lack of understanding of the impact on the communication process of the *actors*' perception of the social situation and the on-going interaction.

From this perspective, the way that individuals perceive themselves and their relations with their interactants has profound impact on the way they make sense of their social environments and subsequently the way they behave. That is to say, during the process of communication individuals make constant assessment of the development of the relationship and the outcomes or potential outcomes of the interaction, and make adjustments accordingly in order to achieve the desired communicational goals. A lot of research has been generated from this perspective, for example, Ting-Toomey and Oetzel's facework (2002), Giles and Smith's speech accommodation (1979), and Cupach and Imahori's identity management theory (Abrams *et al.*, 2002). In these studies a lot of attention is paid to communicators' perceptions of self and others, as communication behaviour is affected profoundly by individuals' perceptions of themselves in relation with those they are communicating with, as well as with the whole environment. These studies show that processing meaning involves not only an understanding of the institutionalised rules and norms, but also the more deeply seated concepts regarding self and others.

The basic assumption of this approach is that the process of communication is guided and influenced by our self-conception, i.e., "our views of ourselves" (Ting-

Toomey, 1999:76), through which we make distinctions between ourselves and others, and that enables us to order our perceptual framework in relation with the outside world, and hence to make sense of the events that happens to us and around us. As I shall show in some detail in the next section, the differences we perceive between ourselves and others have significant influence on how we interpret and make inferences about the social situation we are in, and subsequently how we act or/and react.

2.2.6. Personal Construct and Information Processing

The main theories underlying the social cognitive approach are those of social categorization, social identification, and social attribution. All these theories are built mainly upon two assumptions: that the individual differentiates self and others in their social interactions (through social categorization and social comparison); and that the individual always "strives to achieve a satisfactory concept or image of himself" as proposed by Tajfel in his social identity theory (1981:254). At the core of these theories lies what is referred to as personal construct: self construct and other construct (McCann and Higgins 1990:16). It is assumed that human behaviour is profoundly affected by how one sees himself or herself in relation to others. This self-other differentiation, as I am going to show, has profound impact on the individual in terms of social perception and social relationship building.

Personal construct, according to McCann and Higgins (1990), refers to knowledge of self and others, and this entails values, beliefs and social categories the individual holds in regard to social structure and social behaviour. It is believed to play a key role in understanding how people make sense of the world around them and how they relate and interact with each other. The importance of it lies in its cognitive function relating to the two basic characteristics of social interaction mentioned above: one is that individuals define and identify themselves by making comparisons between themselves and others and making categorical evaluations in social interactions; and the other is what is regarded as the core of social identity theory – that individuals have the need for self distinction in social interactions, as suggested by Tajfel (1978).

In making self-other comparisons, individuals draw on the values and beliefs they hold in their evaluative judgements, because that is what makes them who they are, and also that is the tool by which they make sense of the world. But according to social identity theory, due to the need for positive self-esteem, the evaluation tends to be self-favouring, and this has much impact on information processing. In his work on

attribution theory, Kelley identified three attribution errors resulting from the self-other differentiation (Hewstone and Augoustinos, 1998). The basic idea is that when applying our "assumptions and built-in social categories" (Ting-Toomey, 1999:152) in explaining a social event or behaviour, partly due to the need for positive self, and partly due to availability of information, people tend to look for different causal explanations in accordance with self-other distinction. People tend to make situational attribution to others and dispositional attribution to themselves when positive behaviour is the case, and conversely, dispositional attribution to others and situational attribution to themselves when negative behaviour is the case (Jaspars and Hewstone 1982). The outcomes are very different, as it can be seen from Monson's observation: "an actor's self-attributions are more likely to be influenced by the motive to maintain or enhance one's self-esteem than would an observer's interpersonal attributions. Actors should be more concerned than observers with making dispositional attributions for praiseworthy behavior and situational attributions for blameworthy behavior." (1983:295)

The implication of this on perception is clear: there is a tendency that people would misinterpret others' intentions or meanings in their information processing. However, it is believed that in a highly conventional situation people do not search for causal explanations, as "[I]nformation which is consistent with a person's schema or representation will not require an in-depth search for causality, given that the information is expected and therefore automatically processed." (Hewstone and Augoustinos, 1998:63) Weiner points out that people make causal explanations "mostly for unexpected events and non-attainment of goals (failure)" (1998:62). This is likely often to be the case in intercultural communication as the two sides of the communication do not share the same knowledge or schemata, and therefore cannot produce the expected information or process the information automatically. Consequently, they have to search for causal explanations, and thus are very likely to make self-favouring attributional errors.

2.2.7. Social Identity, Social Categorization and Meaning Attribution

As indicated above, people refer to their categorical knowledge when making attributional judgements. In fact, how people categorize or identify themselves and others is most fundamental to intergroup relation and social perception, and it is central to intercultural communication/interaction. To say it is fundamental to perception is because the social categories that one structures represent the values, beliefs and

assumptions they hold about the social world around us, which form their perceptual framework; or 'social representation' (Oyserman and Markus, 1998). In Ting-Toomey's words, "Social categorization is a fundamental quality of cognition", because it enables us "to manage our chaotic environment in a predictable and efficient fashion." (Ting-Toomey, 1999:149) To say it is fundamental to social relation is because social categories are founded on the basis of social identity and self-categorization, and because, according to social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981; Turner, 1982), together with social differentiation and social comparison, social categories form the basis for social identification, and thus create the distinction between ingroup/s (the group/s that the individual identifies him/herself with) and outgroup/s (the group/s that the individual treats as different from him/herself). In other words, social categorization means to apply the self-other distinction at intergroup level, and that the concept of self is extended to include one's attachment to a social group or social groups. Subsequently, his/her identification with the group/s will affect his/her cognitive response, as well as behaviours in social interactions. These will help us to understand the root of the difficulties in intergroup/intercultural interactions, such as ethnocentrism, stereotype, prejudice, and so on.

To understand how social categorization works, it is necessary to have a grasp of the concept of social identity. Social identity is defined by Tajfel as "the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of the group membership" (quoted in Turner, 1982:18). Social identity is described by Turner as a subsystem of the personal-concept, which is believed to "mediate[s] under appropriate circumstances between the social environment and social behaviour" (1982:21). The core of social identity theory is that in social interactions individuals distinguish people in accordance with whether they are similar to themselves or not, and on the basis of this ingroup-outgroup distinction, ingroup bias is practised (1982). The theory assumes that the need for self distinctiveness goes beyond personal level in intergroup context, and individual members of a social group strive collectively for group distinctiveness for the sake of "self" when intergroup comparisons are drawn or group identities are perceived salient. The collective nature is defined by Turner and Reynolds in the following way: "social identity is a collective self, not a 'looking-glass' self – it is not an 'I' as perceived by the group, but a 'we' who are the group and who define ourselves for ourselves" (2003:136).

What is significant in the social identity concept is that it provides a useful tool for understanding motives and emotions, hence behaviours in intergroup interactions. As an extension to personal identity, social identity impacts significantly on individuals' perception and emotions, and provides guidance for their managing of social relations and interactions. Social identity is believed to be the primary source of ethnocentrism and prejudice towards outgroups.

Ingroup bias or ingroup favouritism could have serious implications for intergroup relations and interactions, because it could lead individuals to biased views or actions against outgroups or members of outgroups. But social identity operates only when the group identity is brought to salience, either being compared unfavourably or favourably (Turner and Reynolds, 2003). That is to say, whether individuals identify themselves or others as independent individuals or as group members in intergroup context depends on social situations, such as task goals, relative social status, etc. For instance, it posits that intergroup behaviour is affected by how individuals perceive the relationship between the groups, especially in regard to the relative social status (Ibid). According to Ting-Toomey (1999), unless their perceived position is under threat, high-status groups tend to show less bias in comparison to low-status groups.

Having reviewed the basic principles of social identity theory, I can now come to the process of social categorization and its impact on social interaction. Social categorization is seen as primarily a distinction between self and others at group level, with perceived similarities within groups and distinctiveness between groups. In this process, people are grouped in accordance with the individual's perception of whether there are similarities or differences between him/her and the other, for instance, race, gender, age, interest, profession, etc. In his *Towards a Cognitive Redefinition of the Social Group* Turner explains that what happens in the process of social categorization is either "a person is assigned some attribute on the basis of his category membership", or a category is assigned "some attribute perceived to characterise an exemplary member" (1982:28). In addition, he maintains that "as category memberships become salient, there will be a tendency to exaggerate the differences on criteria dimensions between individuals falling into distinct categories, and to minimize these differences within each of these categories." (1982)

The consequence of this is that in intergroup interaction, the categorical information or knowledge applied to outgroups or their members could be superficial

and biased. First of all, members of an outgroup tend to be seen as similar to each other, and therefore the individual personalities tend to be discounted, and therefore only what is perceived as salient common characteristics of the group, which could be both lacking in depth and even distorted, are available for reference (e.g. Operario and Fiske, 2003). Secondly, due to the need for self-esteem, there is the likelihood that outgroups could be compared unfavourably when comparisons are drawn.

Another aspect of social identity theory is self identification. This means while distinguishing ourselves from members of outgroups, we identify ourselves with ingroup members in accordance with what is commonly accepted by the ingroup members as the characteristics of the group. The membership entails shared beliefs and emotional attachment, and, as noted earlier, this group identity forms part of one's self-conception. Obviously, when our social identity is under threat, we would naturally respond emotionally.

At the centre of the process of categorization and self identification is a person's self-conception, including both personal identity and social identity. According to Ting-Toomey, self-conception is "related to the core value dimension of individualism-collectivism via the following characteristics: independent versus interdependent self-construal, personal and collective self-esteem, and generalized-based and in-group-based interaction." (1999:76) It is this self-conception that guides people in their self-identification and interaction with others by projecting their own beliefs and values onto the way they interact with the outside world. As the following section will show, the individualism-collectivism value dimension influences greatly how individuals perceive themselves in relation to others.

Another aspect of social identity theory is that in social interactions, depending on social situations people could either draw from their personal identities (defined as an individual's perception of him/herself in terms of personal traits) or social identities. The assumption is that social identity will become active when the social context is perceived as intergroup, and personal identity will be activated when the social context is perceived as interpersonal. However, whether an individual treats a member of an outgroup as an individual or a representative of the outgroup depends on how he or she perceives the relationship between them. In social categorization, people apply their evaluative criteria in making comparison and judgemental decisions. In Tajfel's words, "[i]t is this comparative perspective which links social categorizing with social identity"

(1981:256). How a person identifies him/herself in relation with an outgroup and how he/she defines their relationship is the result of social comparison. It is through this social comparison and social identification that people find their place in society.

It becomes evident from the discussion that social categorization is value-laden as well as subjective. According to Tajfel: "Categorising any aspect of the environment, physical or social, is based on the adoption of certain criteria for the division of a number of items into more or less inclusive separate groupings which differ in terms of these (and associated) criteria and resemble each other on the same (or associated) criteria within each of the groupings." (1981:147) The subjective and value-laden nature means bias would easily occur. First, based on the assumption that individuals will seek to enhance self-esteem, evaluative criteria that one adopts for social categorization are likely to be intrinsically subjective to bias. Second, the value framework one bases his/her judgement on could differ significantly from that of other people – people with different cultural backgrounds. It is not hard then to see that due to value difference, attribution errors caused by self bias, or perception of conflicting interests, it is highly possible that misunderstanding, negative feelings, even social conflicts would not be a rare occurrence in intergroup encounters.

Stereotyping is typical of intergroup encounters. A brief review of literature on stereotyping shows that though stereotypes ensue from the process of categorization, contents of stereotype are very much dependent on situation (Operario and Fiske, 2003). First of all, categorization is identified as the root cause of stereotypes, which are defined by Tajfel as: "certain generalizations reached by individuals. They derive in large measures from, or are an instance of, the general cognitive process of categorizing." (1981:145) But crucially, stereotypes per se are not negative by nature. They are simply incomplete and distorted image of a group or members of a group, being conceptualised by Allport as exaggerated beliefs associated with a category of people (Operario and Fiske, 2003). Although they are frequently associated with negative attitudes and prejudice, recent research findings show that there isn't an inevitable link between the two. Rather, negative attitudes are the consequences of the interplay of various social factors (ibid.).

Based on their empirical studies, Operario and Fiske argue that "stereotypes more likely contain ambivalent beliefs, with a mixture of mostly negative but some positive attributes." (2003:24) The question then is in what circumstances the negative or the

positive attributes will be perceived as salient. In their view whether the positive or the negative attributes are to be foregrounded is determined mostly by social context. For example, whether outgroups are perceived as being cooperative or competitive, depends on the relative social status of, or relationship between the two sides. However, they believe that although stereotype contents are bivalent rather than negative, stereotypes augment negative and extreme behaviour, because in intergroup interactions people's attention tends to be caught by negative information concerning outgroups (2003).

They maintain that stereotypes remain as long as people categorize others automatically and interpret information about them in accordance with their initial categorization (2003). To break a stereotype, or to revise the initial views and beliefs, according to them, needs motivation of the individual, as the process of stereotyping, they argue, is "controlled by motivation" (2003:33). Thus, when motivated, people will turn their attention to the new information or the information that is not consistent with the stereotypes, and subsequently revise their beliefs. So whether an individual will go beyond the stage of stereotyping depends on whether he/she is motivated by the social situation, which includes task goals, relationship, etc.

Now I can summarize the impact of social identity on meaning transmission and relationship management. Earlier discussion introduced the three sources for communication operation suggested by Gudykunst – script (social norm), intention, and emotions. The above discussion enabled us to see more clearly how these three aspects are related. A similar model is proposed by Ting-Toomey, in which meaning is perceived as containing three layers: content meaning, identity meaning, and relational meaning. By her definition, identity meaning "involves issues such as the display of respect or rejection and is thus much more subtle than overt, content meaning" (1999:19). Relational meaning, however, refers to power distance and relational distance, which, according to her, is referred to predominantly by non-verbal cues.

In regard to management of relations, social identity theory throws light on our understanding of the issues of intergroup perception and relationship. Through social categorization, self identification, and social attribution, individuals are able to identify themselves with others and apply their values and beliefs in relating to others. People are passionate about their identities and the values they hold, which represent their self-conception, therefore any conflict involving these elements will certainly be emotionally charged. Although social identity is believed to play a pivotal role in the

production of the negative feelings towards culturally different others, yet, according to Turner and Reynolds, ethnocentrism and prejudice are the result of a combination of various factors including historical, social, economic, and political factors (2003).

All of this provides important insights for development of intercultural competence and ultimately for the study of the students on the business Chinese course.

2.3. Intercultural Communication – Cross-Cultural Perspective

The discussion will now turn to studies on differences between cultures in terms of communication behaviours. I will first review some theories on how and why cultures differ from each other in terms of communication behaviours, and then look into some more detailed studies on different communication styles. This, together with the previous discussion, will lay the ground for my data analysis in later chapters. The cross-cultural approach has been widely applied in studies on intercultural organisations and workplace behaviours as well as in intercultural training, which is relevant for understanding business language course.

A review of the literature, which is by no means all-inclusive, given the quantity involved, leaves me with the impression that the majority of research on communication behaviour has been in one way or another influenced or inspired by Hall's high- and low- context communication theory and/or Hofstede's hypothesis of value orientations. Although there have been various approaches in studying intercultural behaviours, and many theories have been proposed and developed, it is clear that Hall's context approach and Hofstede's value dimensions are among those that have had significant influence on the development of research on intercultural phenomena and our present-day understanding of intercultural communication and intercultural communication behaviours. From different perspectives, they lead us to see some important differences between communication systems and thus to have the means to decipher different behaviours.

In his book *Beyond Culture*, Hall proposes that communication behavioural differences in all cultures can be understood in a comparative manner within the framework of high-context versus low-context communication. He defines high-context and low-context in the following way:

> A high context (HC) communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. A low context

> (LC) communication is just the opposite; i.e., the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code. (1977:91)

The basic principle of this theory is that cultures differ in the way meaning or message is transmitted. People from high-context cultures tend to make more use of contextual resource to convey meaning, and to rely less on verbal message, therefore stressing less on verbal clarity, while comparatively people from low-context cultures tend to stress verbal explicitness, paying less attention to social context. But all the cultures are comparable along the high- to low-context spectrum (Hall, 1977; 2000).

The context theory allows a view beyond the verbal manifestations of meanings, enabling us to take a fully picture of how meaning is conveyed and interpreted. As the following discussion will show, the high- and low- context communication theory is a very broad conceptual framework and various aspects of communication behaviours can be understood contrastively under this system. I am going to show that Ting-Toomey has brought together a wide range of thematic dimensions in regard to intercultural communication behaviours under this high- and low- context communication system.

Hofstede's values dimensions have also been widely applied in inter- or cross-cultural behavioural studies, especially in cross-cultural work-related studies, such as intercultural business and management studies. Derived from empirical data from 40 countries, four dimensions were proposed originally in 1980. They are: individualism versus collectivism; masculinity versus femininity; uncertainty avoidance; and power distance. A fifth dimension – long-short term orientation – was added later in 1991 (Hofstede, 1998) on the basis of research by Bond's Chinese Value Survey, which is thought to reflect a "Eastern bias", because the first four dimensions had been thought to reflect mainly a Western bias, and therefore could not explain satisfactorily some of the features in the data which appears to be unique to Eastern Asian cultures (Hofstede and Bond, 1988; Hofstede, 1993). Culture is defined by Hofstede as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes one group or category of people from another." (1980; 1993; 1998) Accordingly, his value orientation approach is based on the assumption that human interactions are fundamentally influenced by the values they hold, and therefore knowing the value orientations of a culture group can help with understanding and predicting behaviours of individuals from that culture. Important to his approach is the assumption that differences between cultures can be understood from where each of the cultures locates along the value dimensions, which are thought to

reflect the most fundamental aspects of human experience, and thus represent the most prevailing value tendencies in all cultures.

The value dimensions provide us with a useful tool to understand the differences between cultures in regard to the tendency people think and behave. It has, however, some limits, especially for understanding individual behaviours, as culture is far too complex and broad, and individuals' behaviours are affected by various factors. In fact, the result of Hofstede's original work shows that the four dimensions can only explain 49 percent of the data collected from the IBM survey, and there are many other differences between cultures. A recent work by Gerhart and Fang (2005) challenged Hofstede's assumptions and findings, arguing that the assumption that national culture plays the dominant role in international management does not reflect the reality, as it fails to recognise other important factors such as organisational culture. Also, Dahlén (1997) warns, to make broad categorisation of cultures without realising its limit will result in rigid stereotypes. These help to emphasise the point that intercultural issues are complex and have to be dealt with great care. Nonetheless, this value dimension approach will remain to be a useful means to understand why cultures differ, and thus raise cultural awareness. Among the five dimensions, individualism-collectivism is the most widely researched, and in combination with other dimensions, it provides explanations for many behavioural differences between cultures. Some of the differences are clearly revealed in my data. Now, let's take a brief look at the basic concepts of some of the value dimensions that are relevant to my data.

Individualism-collectivism is described very broadly by Hofstede as a way that "describes the relationship between the individual and the collectivity which prevails in a given society." (1980:213) He maintains that because of the important role it plays in shaping social norms both "people's mental programming" and the structure and function of social institutions are affected by this relationship (1980). To break through the metaphor of mental programming it shows a lot of overlap with the social identity theory, addressing the process of individuals' establishing relationships with others. The appeal of this approach lies in its function to look into how a culture organises itself. A clear description of its meaning and its social consequences is provided by Ting-Toomey:

> Basically, *individualism* refers to the broad value tendencies of a culture in emphasising the importance of individual identity over group identity, individual rights over group rights, and individual needs over group needs. Individualism promotes self-efficiency, individual responsibilities, and personal autonomy. In

> contrast, *collectivism* refers to the broad value tendencies of a culture in emphasising the importance of the "we" identity over the "I" identity, group rights over individual rights, and in-group-oriented needs over individual wants and desires. Collectivism promotes relational interdependence, in-group harmony, and in-group collaborative spirit. (1999:67)

This account explains clearly that orientation toward the "I" identity or "we" identity is an important quality that shapes a society - which in social identity terms would be considered an ingroup - in terms of relationships and behaviours.

Uncertainty avoidance is defined as the extent to which members of a culture try to avoid uncertainty (Gudykunst, 2002a). Hofstede argues that uncertainty, which is a basic aspect of life, creates anxiety, and different societies have adapted to it in different ways. These differences are reflected in collectively held values (1980). There is a tendency that members of high uncertainty avoidance cultures have a low tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity, and conversely, low uncertainty avoidance cultures have high tolerance.

Power distance refers to how the unequal distribution of power is accepted by the less powerful individuals or groups (Hofstede, 1980). It is thought that in small power distance societies people tend to value equal power distribution, equal rights and relations, while in large power distance societies people tend to accept unequal power distribution, and the society is more hierarchically structured (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

The concept of the long-short term orientation will be discussed in detail in later discussion. Having reviewed the basic concepts of the two theories, the discussion will move to examine how cultures differ in terms of values and behaviours.

2.3.1. Communication Behaviour – Differences in Communication Style

The main idea of context theory is that people from different cultures are accustomed to different ways of conveying and interpreting meaning, i.e., either verbally more explicit or context-dependent, and this difference poses great challenges for intercultural communication. To understand this better, it is necessary to take a closer look at what exactly context means. The quotation from Hall given above shows that context is to be understood as both the physical context and the knowledge stored in the person in regard to what is appropriate for given situations. For instance, what is expected of a person as a family member, a friend, or a manager at workplace is very different, and for each of these roles, there are different social norms to follow. Thus, "Context is the information that surrounds an event; it is inextricably bound up with the

meaning of that event." (Hall and Hall, 1990:6) Basically, the difference between high-context and low-context communication is that in high context cultures, people are more accustomed to following the social norms which define clearly the social roles and what is expected of these roles in given situations, therefore less is needed to be stated verbally. Opposite to this, low-context cultures have less clearly formulated norms and social patterns to follow, hence verbal explicitness is needed each time when communication takes place. Obviously, difficulties would occur when people from different contexts meet, because they do not share the same meaning embedded in the social context. Hall and Hall (1990) rightly pointed out that high-context people are apt to get impatient and irritated when low-context people keep on feeding them with information they already know, and conversely, low-context people are likely to get confused when the information from the high-context people is insufficient as far as they are concerned.

The contrast between high- and low-context is thought to be closely related to the difference between direct communication mode and indirect communication mode at culture level (e.g. Ting-Toomey, 1999; Gudykunst, 1998). Asian cultures, such as Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese, which are believed to be on the high-context side, are thought to be less direct in comparison with Western cultures. (Ting-Toomey, 1999) For example, it is often commented that people from East Asian countries tend not to say "no" directly, instead they would resort to contextual measures to throw hints to the other side, such as using silence, ambiguous terms, or changing conversation topics, or talking "around and around the point, in effect putting all the pieces in place except the crucial one" (Hall, 1977:113), expecting the cues to be picked up by the listener. Similarly, when making a request or complaint, they also tend to "beat around the bush", subtly dropping the hint. An example from Ting-Toomey can illustrate this point very well. In making a complaint to the neighbour about a noise at late hours, an American lady would come to the point straight away with her neighbour in a confrontational manner, while a Japanese lady, instead of complaining about the noise directly, made her point in a subtle way by praising the diligence of the neighbour's child who practiced music in late evening, and her neighbour quickly picked up the point and made an apology. It is obvious that the same message is stated in very different ways. The Japanese lady's approach is context oriented, which gently reminds the listener of the social norm that making noise late in the evening is not socially appropriate. It is conceivable that if each of them were placed in the other's

context, the Japanese lady would end up with difficulty to get her message across; and the American lady would find her neighbour horrified by her behaviour, and herself to be perceived as a very rude and unreasonable person.

It is not true that the indirect way of communication is unique to high-context cultures. Rather, the difference lies in how it is perceived and the social functions that it performs. In English speaking cultures, the very existence of the expression of "beat around the bush" is evidence that indirect style is by no means an unknown social phenomenon. However, the concepts associated with it are not the same. Generally speaking, apart from the situations where the topic of the conversation is difficult or awkward, such as expressing sympathetic feelings or something as a taboo, indirect style is normally perceived less positively in low-context cultures, as indirect communication in such a context tends to be less efficient, and therefore it is not what is normally expected in communication. Sometimes the indirectness is thought to be an indication that the speaker has something to hide. However, in East Asian cultures, which are placed at the end of the high-context pole (Ting-Toomey, 1999), indirectness is often taken as a necessary strategy for managing potential conflict and maintaining harmony, and therefore is often perceived in a positive light.

Behind the difference in behaviour there lies the more deeply-seated difference in value orientation. Individualism-collectivism dimension is thought to have the most significant influence on communication styles. Collectivistic values, which, as shown earlier, emphasise group goals, in-group harmony, and in-group cooperation, are thought to be the most important contributing factor for indirect communication style (e.g. Hara and Kim, 2004; Ting-Toomey, 1999). Studies show that people in individualistic cultures tend to emphasise individual identity and stress personal goals, personal rights and independence, while people in collectivistic cultures tend to identify themselves as part of the group rather than as independent individuals, and therefore stress group goals, and interdependence (e.g. Ting-Toomey, 1999; Gudykunst, 2002a). For the sake of group unity and interdependence between members, it is necessary for collectivistic cultures to emphasise group harmony and cooperation. Adopting an indirect communication approach enables members to reduce in-group conflict, and avoid face threatening circumstances.

In East Asian cultures, face concern is a very important aspect of social relations and interactions. Face is defined by Ting-Toomey as our public self image (Gudykunst,

1998), and in Hofstede and Bond's words, face means "one's dignity, self-respect, and prestige." (1988:8) Dignity and self-respect is important to people of all cultures, but cultures differ in terms of how to work on face. According to Ting-Toomey and other researchers, people in individualistic cultures "use more self-oriented face-saving strategies and the self-face approval-seeking interaction strategies more than members of collectivistic cultures", who tend to "use other-oriented face-saving strategies and use other-face approval-enhancement interaction strategies more than members of individualistic cultures" (Gudykunst and Lee, 2002:40). Other-face approval-enhancement interaction is a reflection of the collectivistic value orientation. It is a strategy that is used to satisfy the others' needs for positive self image, and in turn, maintains one's own self image. As the earlier example demonstrated, the Japanese lady did not point out directly the fact that she was disturbed by the noise, because she was concerned that would hurt her neighbour's face, and in turn her own face would be threatened as her action would provoke disharmony. From what has been discussed, it is clear that an indirect approach is one of the communicational strategies in East Asian cultures to help upholding face for both sides of the communication, hence maintaining a smooth relation.

The recent study by Hara and Kim on the effect of self-construals has provided fresh evidence to support the link between indirect communication and collectivistic values (2004). Through an empirical study, Hara and Kim examined the relationship between self-construals and conversation indirectness. They suggest that there is a positive relation between interdependent self-construal and conversational indirectness, and a negative one between independent self-construal and conversational indirectness (2004:10). To appreciate this, it is necessary to have an idea of the key concepts. Self-construal is referred to as "an individual's perceptions assisting them in understanding themselves and the relationships with others in the world around them" (Markus and Kitayama, 1991:27), and is thus related to the earlier discussion of self-identity and social categorization. The interdependent self-construal according to Markus and Kitayama "entails seeing oneself as part of encompassing social relationship and recognizing and to large extent organized by what the actor perceives to be the thoughts, feelings and actions of others in the relationship" (Oguri and Gudykunst, 2002:580). The independent self-construal, on the other hand, is defined as "autonomous, independent, individualistic, egocentric, separate, idiocentric, and self-contained (Markus and Kitayama, 1991:28)". The interdependent self-construal reflects the "we"

identity – the 'social identity' - , and the independent self-construal the "I" identity – the 'personal identity' of social identity theory. Although everyone possesses both, it is believed that "individuals who emphasise independent self construals predominate in individualistic cultures ..., and individuals who emphasise interdependent self construals predominate in collectivistic cultures..." (Oguri and Gudykunst, 2002:580).

The result of Hara and Kim's research shows that people with interdependent self-construal are more inclined to interpret and produce indirect messages than people with independent self-construal (2004:13). This provides a further explanation from the perspective of social identity of how collectivistic culture differs from individualistic culture in terms of perceptions and behaviour.

Furthermore, there is evidence that the way a written message is structured is also affected by the individualism-collectivism value orientation. In discussing the cultural influence on rhetorical patterns in letter writing, Campbell (1998) demonstrated how differently a traditional Chinese formal letter is structured in comparison with an English one. According to him, opposite to the English version, which starts immediately with the main point, the Chinese version starts with something fairly general, appearing irrelevant to an English reader, and comes to the main point only at the end of the writing after a considerable length of "going around", which gradually leads to the main point. This indirect approach of Chinese letter writing is thought to be a reflection not only of the aesthetic views of Chinese people, but also of a concern for the emotional aspect of communication, i.e., to establish a "we" relationship between the writer and the reader (1998). The Chinese rhetorical pattern thus consists of both the aspect of content information and relational information: demonstrating politeness and showing consideration for the other's face, which is necessary for relationship building. Campbell rightly pointed out that the very part of the Chinese writing which appears puzzling to a Western reader is in effect the message concerning face for both sides (1998:39). This is the same as in face-to-face interaction.

Apart from what has been discussed, i.e., high- and low- context communication, collectivistic versus individualistic values, other-face concern versus self-face concern, and indirect mode versus direct mode, there is also a lot of research on some other aspects of communication, for example, the effect of social status on communication in different cultures, the differences between cultures in terms of self assertiveness in communication, and etc. According to Ting-Toomey, many of these characteristics can

be understood systematically under the broad system of high-context and low-context communication. Below we can find from the table that she provides many differences between cultures in communication behaviours being associated to the dichotomy of high-context and low-context communication.

The Low-Context Communication (LCC) and High-Context Communication (HCC) Frameworks

LCC characteristics	HCC characteristics
Individualistic values	Group-oriented values
Self-face concern	Mutual-face concern
Linear logic	Spiral logic
Direct style	Indirect style
Person-oriented style	Status-oriented style
Self-enhancement style	Self-effacement style
Speaker-oriented style	Listener-oriented style
Verbal-based understanding	Context-based understanding

LCC examples			HCC examples
Germany	United States	Saudi Arabia	Japan
Switzerland	Canada	Kuwait	China
Denmark	Australia	Mexico	South Korea
Sweden	United Kingdom	Nigeria	Vietnam

(Ting-Toomey, 1999:101)

The characteristic of being spiral of some high context communication can be seen from the earlier example about the rhetorical differences between Chinese and English letter writing styles. The example shows that due to the concern for establishing rapport with the message receiver the Chinese style appears to take a circular approach to deliver a message. It seems that face concern is a strong motive for this indirect, spiral logic in communication style.

The contrast between the person-oriented style and the status-oriented style can be seen as a reflection of a conceptual difference in power distance. It is believed that with status-oriented style the communicators pay more attention to their relative social status and appropriateness of their behaviours, which "emphasises the importance of honoring prescribed power-based membership identities", while with person-oriented style attention is paid more to individuals' unique personal identities. Some research has been carried out in this respect, for instance, by Okabe and by Yum. Their research reports that people from the USA, a society that scores relatively lower on both the power distance index and the high- and low- context scale, prefer informality and are less concerned with titles and honorifics, and tend to treat each other in more equal terms; while people from Japan, Korea, the cultures that are higher on both of the scales, are

more concerned about formality and appropriateness in terms of using titles, and paying due respect in accordance with hierarchical orders (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Compared with Japan and South Korea, China is placed higher on the power distance index (c.f. Hofstede and Bond, 1988; Hofstede, 1993), and is also located at the very high end of high- and low- context scale together with Japan and Korea, and therefore it is conceivable that communication is likely to be status-oriented in Chinese culture. In fact, in Chinese tradition there used to be a set of clearly defined social norms, based on Confucian philosophy, which required people to observe the social hierarchical orders in their social interactions and to pay due respects to their seniors, either in age or position, and in return people in senior positions should provide caring and protection to their juniors.

Apart from power distance, another value orientation – the long term orientation, referred to also as Confucian dynamism (Hofstede and Bond, 1988), is also thought to impact on the emphasis on formality and social status. The East Asian cultures are not the only ones that are characterised by large power distance, and are not even the ones with the largest power distance, yet, it seems to be a more prominent feature of these cultures to emphasise formality and social status in social interactions. Thus the difference in power distance alone does not offer a full explanation for it. The Confucian dynamism is thought to be behind this power-oriented communication style.

The contrasting features of long and short term orientations are thought to be: long-term orientation emphasising social orders, hierarchical respect, collective face-saving, long-term planning, thrift-centred, and long-term outcomes; short-term orientation on the other hand emphasising personal survival, personal respect, individual face-saving, short- to medium- term planning, spending-centred, and short- to medium- term outcomes (Ting-Toomey, 1999:74). What is described above shows that the long term orientation is related to collectivistic values with a future perspective. According to Hofstede and Bond, the contrast between future-oriented and past and present oriented mentality forms the core of the long-short term dimension, and the future-oriented mentality is closely related to the Confucian ideology of social order and social stability (Hofstede and Bond, 1988).

Confucian philosophy and ethics have played a very significant role in shaping the Chinese tradition, and have also had a strong influence in many East Asian cultures. An important aspect of the Confucian ethics which has fundamentally influenced social

conduct in these cultures is an emphasis on respect for social order and formality in social activities, and an emphasis on personal moral perfection. The idea is that by so doing each member of the society is able to know exactly his or her social place/s and therefore how to behave accordingly, thus it is possible to maintain social order and harmony, hence social stability. This ideology contains two essential aspects: on the one hand the acceptance of power disparity; and on the other hand good behaviours of individuals, fulfilling the expectations of various social roles and positions. These are built upon the concepts of loyalty and duty to one's groups, which are strictly stratified. However, power implicates responsibility if it is to be accepted and to be lasting, thus as a balancing part of an unequal power structure it is necessary that those with power should be responsible for the wellbeing of their subordinates, and more importantly, should set good examples for them. According to the Confucian ideology, as pointed out by Hofstede and Bond, society should be based on the model of the family, where the parents take care of their children, while the children "should learn to restrain themselves, to overcome their individuality so as to maintain the harmony in the family (if only on the surface)" (1988:8) The supreme aim of Confucianism is to achieve long term social stability and social harmony, thus individuals' needs and wants, which are thought to be comparatively less important and temporary, should give precedence to the overall well-being of their groups or society. This tradition of valuing social harmony and hierarchical order provides clues for understanding the behavioural characteristics of respecting power and rigid formalities in many Asian cultures.

Another two sets of differences in communication styles can also be understood in relation to the Confucian Dynamism dimension. Self-effacement style is thought to be typical of East Asian cultures, where people tend to use understatements when referring to their own performance or achievements. It can be seen as a kind of ritual to demonstrate modesty, and it implies showing respect and giving face. For example, when making presentations of their work, introducing themselves, or even offering food to guests, people from these cultures would start by saying something to the effect that what they have done or what they have is not very good, which of course is often far from the truth. This behaviour reflects the underlying value that modesty is an important virtue, which helps to lubricate relationships between individuals, because to be modest helps everyone to maintain their face, thus posing no threat to other people's self-conception. For people who are not familiar with this type of communication, this would appear strange or insincere, and sometimes it is interpreted as lack of confidence.

Similarly, in contrast to speaker-oriented style, which is thought to be typical in American and European cultures in general, listener-oriented style is thought to be more characteristic of East Asian cultures. One of the main features of the listener-oriented style is tolerance for silence. According to some researchers, silence is valued in Asian countries (Lim, 2002), but it is important to bear in mind that any generalisation could be misleading, and silence is also valued in some other countries, such as in Finland. It is thought to have important role to play in social interactions, and it carries meanings that are not familiar to people in speaker-oriented cultures, as we can see from the following observation from Ting-Toomey:

> ……prolonged silence is often viewed as "empty pauses" or "ignorant lapses" in the Western rhetorical model. From the high-context perspective, silence can be the essence of the language of superiority and inferiority, affecting such relationships as teacher-student, male-female, and expert-client. The process of silencing or refraining from speaking can have both positive and negative effects. In some situations, notably, in many Asian collectivistic cultures, "quiet is demanded by others and by those who must themselves be quiet. Being quiet – effecting a self-imposed silence – is often valued in some social environments. Being quiet is often a sign of respect for the wisdom and expertise of others" (1999:110)

Clearly, this listener-oriented communication reflects the power distance dimension. In Chinese culture, this implies differences in age, position, experience, and prestige. As the other side of the coin, in these cultures there exist some tacit rules and norms in regard to when and where one is expected to keep quiet in accordance with the relative positions of the communicators and the social circumstances.

In addition, silence is in general viewed more positively in some Asian cultures, such as in China, Japan than in parts of the West. Traditionally it is valued as a quality of being mature and trustworthy, and thus in a lot of social contexts reticence is highly preferred. Eloquence, on the other hand, is sometimes viewed suspiciously as a sign of not being serious, or attention-seeking. Furthermore, in Chinese tradition talking too much is often viewed as a cause for troubles, such as disputes and conflicts, and hence should be avoided. The tolerance, or rather valuing of silence should thus be viewed as the result of a combination of different concepts and value orientations, i.e., power distance, collectivism, long-term perspective, and uncertainty avoidance. It contains the concepts of recognising hierarchical social distance (showing respect to authority), group relationship and harmony (modesty; self-effacing; face), and risk avoidance (uncertainty avoidance). Not knowing the different meanings associated with silence, people from low-context cultures who value verbal explicitness would find long silence confusing and frustrating.

Much has been said about the relationship between indirect communication and the value orientations towards collectivism, large power distance, long term orientation, and higher uncertainty avoidance. We can also find from research literature some of the impact of the value differences on work-related behaviours. For instance, in their studies on management styles, Pan and Zhang (2004) argue that Chinese managers tend to adopt indirect forms of influence as their management style, which might be attributed to the society's strong orientation towards collectivism and a relatively higher level of uncertainty avoidance. According to them, Chinese managers tend to avoid risks in making difficult decisions, and in such circumstances they would prefer to employ an indirect approach to "avoid losing *face* and damaging *guanxi*" (2004:86). Both face and *guanxi* are prominent social phenomena in Chinese culture, and both are based on the collectivistic values and the preference for certainty, as pointed out by Pan and Zhang. Basically, *guanxi* refers to a long term relationship between either individuals or groups which enables them to reciprocate favours. *Guanxi* is a common practice in China, although whose function is to solicit favours and some *guanxi* are specifically built up for business purposes, yet it is in large extent based on friendship, and therefore friends often serve as *guanxi* when there is the need. The importance of *guanxi* and *face* to business is such that a lot of research on work-related studies involving China pays special attention to these phenomena, some from the perspective of business management, some from the perspective of marketing, and some from more general purpose of gaining cooperation in various aspects of work (e.g. Selmer, 2002; Sergeant and Frenkel, 1998; Wong and Slater, 2002). This is not to say however that business relations, face and use of personal relationships are absent from Western business practice, but as with all these dimensions for comparing societies, they are thought to be *relatively* less important. More discussion will be made on these later in Chapter 4 and conclusion in relation with business language learning and students' development in intercultural competence.

Clearly, the difference in social values and communication behaviours between high- and low- context cultures makes intercultural communication very challenging indeed. The following example from personal experience illustrates what would happen when the communicators do not share the same meanings, and each side interprets the others behaviours in accordance with their own cultural reference. Not long ago, a Chinese PhD student in a British university lodged a complaint about the misunderstanding which happened between him and his examiners. One of the

arguments presented by the student was that due to cultural differences, the two sides failed to communicate effectively. According to him, due to his cultural background, he found himself unable to defend his arguments vigorously and forcefully in front of the experts when being challenged. The reason is that in his culture students are not expected to argue with teachers or someone who is senior even when they think they are right, because that would be perceived as rude and arrogant. However, his behaviour was taken by his examiners as being incapable of producing arguments and defending his own views. What is more crucial to the misunderstanding, in the student's view, is that he had difficulties in understanding the different meanings attached to the gestures of the examiners. He argued that nodding and smiling is normally interpreted as a signal of agreement or consent in his culture, and since his examiners kept on nodding and smiling, he thus thought his views were agreed upon, and thus was not aware of the problems. It is arguable that this student should adapt to the host culture, nevertheless, this example shows that some seemingly trivial differences between cultures can have quite serious consequences.

So, this chapter starts with a brief discussion of the relationship between sojourn experience and the competence to adapt to intercultural challenge. This led to a detailed discussion on the process of intercultural or intergroup communication and then cultural differences on communication behaviours. Some theories with regard to meaning production, social identity, and comparative studies on communicational behaviours were reviewed, with some reference to the impact of cultural behavioural difference on inter- or cross- cultural workplace. This discussion has prepared the ground for our next topic, developing the competence for intercultural communication in the next chapter. As a recap, I will highlight the issues that are important for the development of the theoretical framework for the case analysis. Some of them will be drawn on again in the next theoretical chapter, and these issues are:

- Sojourners experience sociocultural and psychological difficulties. To overcome these it is necessary to manage emotions, communication, and relationships in the new cultural environment. The process of overcoming these difficulties is conceptualised as a learning process, through which one becomes increasingly efficient in dealing with intercultural problems.
- Communication is profoundly affected by how individuals perceive themselves in relation to others, and hrough social categorisation and

identification individuals establish relationships with others and take actions accordingly. The self biased nature of this process leads to ethnocentric views in intercultural communication.

- Cultures differ significantly in terms of how people communicate, and these differences are reflected not only in linguistic terms but also in terms of communication styles and worldviews that guide social behaviours.

Chapter Three

Developing Intercultural Competence

The discussion in the previous chapter highlighted the challenge involved in intercultural communication both in terms of cognition and affect. In this chapter, our attention will be on the development of the competence to cope with the challenge, especially from the perspective of language teaching and learning. The discussion will include the issues of what intercultural competence is about, why it is important to develop such a competence, and the role language teaching and learning can and should play in developing intercultural competence.

3.1. What Is Considered Important for Successful Intercultural Communication?

It is evident from the preceding discussion that intercultural communication is potentially imbued with misunderstanding and communication breakdowns due to its complex nature and the wide range of knowledge and skills required. Thus to achieve desired goals of or satisfaction from intercultural communication, it is essential to avoid or reduce misunderstanding so that the intended meaning of a message can effectively reach its recipient. Literature on intercultural communication and intergroup interaction shows that misunderstanding and communication breakdowns occur predominantly because of two reasons: deficiency in knowledge and skills to conduct effective communication on the one hand, and psychological barriers stemming from inability to control situations and issues related to self-identities on the other hand, though as we have seen to some extent and shall see further, the two are not independent of each other in operation, but rather in a relationship of co-existence and being mutually reinforcing. So it can be said in the most general terms that to communicate successfully in an intercultural context requires the abilities to handle both deficiency in knowledge/skill and psychological difficulties, which I will discuss in much more detail below.

3.1.1 Affect and Effective Communication

The earlier discussion shows that cognition and affect are closely related and reciprocate. As we saw in the last chapter, according to Ting-Toomey, meaning can be understood as being composed of three different layers, i.e., content meaning, identity meaning and relational meaning (1999), indicating the interactive nature of cognition and affect in social interactions. It is believed that positive affect would trigger positive cognitions and actions, and conversely, negative affect would produce negative

cognitions and behaviours (Wilder and Simon, 2003). So to reduce misunderstanding entails, as early discussion suggests, not only an ability to encode and decode information, which requires knowledge and skills to access specific meaning systems and to manage the operation of communication, but also, equally if not more importantly, an ability to handle emotion-inducing factors. This is because in intercultural interactions individuals are challenged in terms of "sense of self, cultural identity, and worldview" (Paige, 1993), and such challenge would inevitably give rise to anxieties and uncertainties, which could have serious impact on perceptions and behaviours. In fact, it is believed that intercultural anxiety is one of the main causal factors for negative feelings such as bias, prejudice, or discrimination (Stephan and Stephan, 2002; Wilder and Simon, 2003).

To recall the issues of culture shock and social identity discussed earlier will help to understand the impact of emotions. First of all, emotion has been shown to have powerful influence on cognitive abilities, affecting individuals in their judgements. For example, it is believed that intergroup anxieties and uncertainties could affect predictions of attitudes, feelings, and behaviours in others (Gudykunst, 1998; Stephan and Stephan, 1992), and consequently produce difficulties in behavioural response. Also, it is thought that people tend to favour in-group members over out-group members in social encounters because of in-group attachment and positive in-group evaluation. Some studies show that anxiety leads to reliance on simplified information processing, and similarly, there is evidence indicating that people in a negative mood may recall more negative information about others (Stephan and Stephan, 2002; Wilder and Simon, 2003). Conceivably, mismatch of expectations and distorted image of others could have serious negative consequences both in terms of accuracy in perceptions and reaction as the consequence. According to Stephan and Stephan, there is a clear link between emotional states and perceptions and behaviours (2002).

The discussion in the last chapter shows that prejudice is the product of social categorisation and social comparison, and it is often the result of lacking understanding of other cultures. This means that in the process of intercultural communication perception and evaluation of others is often based on "a configuration of beliefs or appraisals of an object or situation in relation to the self" (Smith, 1999:184). Thus due to the self-accentuated nature of social categorisation and the tendency of attribution errors (e.g. Hewstone and Augoustinos, 1998), the appraisal process is liable to be affected by one's feelings and moods, and as a result perceptions could be inaccurate or

biased. There is little doubt that when taking a biased stance and being confident in making judgement on the basis of insufficient information, the predictions and expectations of others could be seriously affected in terms of accuracy. As can be seen easily, unless emotions are effectively managed, it is difficult for communicators to achieve their communication objectives, and hence satisfaction with their interactions with others.

Secondly, literature on intergroup contact shows that negative affect could also undermine motivations to interact with culturally different others. It is believed that high level of anxiety or negative perceptions of others could result in avoidance in social contact, or ineffectiveness in communication (e.g. Spitzberg and Cupach, 1984; Stephan and Stephan, 1992; Wilder and Simon, 2003). For instance, in their studies on the role of affect in intergroup bias Wilder and Simon come to the view that anxieties caused by negative presumptions or predictions about outgroup members would make individuals "either avoid the contact, misconstrue the experience, or behave in a defensive manner that may poison the experience." (2003:165) Furthermore, it is believed that unsuccessful encounters with outgroups would undermine further encounters, because negative outcomes in history would have negative effect on motivations (Spitzberg and Cupach, 1984). Understandably, if individuals fail to obtain satisfaction from their interactions with others, it is not very likely that they would be enthusiastic in getting involved in further contact with them.

Communication is by nature an interdependent activity, requiring commitment and cooperation from both sides of the communication, and thus "Competent communication is considered a coordinated process in which individuals achieve goals in a prosocial fashion" (Spitzberg and Cupach, 1984:68). To encourage commitment and cooperation, and hence to achieve the desired goals it is necessary that the emotional needs of the communicators are properly addressed. Believing that self-perception is at the core of effective communication, Ting-Toomey contends that "satisfactory outcomes include the feeling of being understood, the feeling of being respected, and the feeling of being supported." (1999:46)

So far, our discussion has shown how important it is for successful communication to manage emotions, and we will see later some of the approaches suggested in handling emotion-inducing factors. But first, let's look at other factors that contribute to successful communication.

3.1.2. Language, Culture and Effective Communication

It is obvious that successful communication requires the abilities to exchange information and to establish shared meanings between communicators, as it concerns directly whether the two sides of the communication can achieve successfully their goals, e.g. to meet the expectations of each other or to get done what is intended to be done. Whether the purpose/s of communication is met affects the psychological wellbeing of the communicators as what is at stake is their sense of being in control and self conceptions.

But what are the abilities for exchanging and sharing meanings? It requires first of all, *inter alia*, the abilities to use the communication tools – verbal and non-verbal symbols – to get meanings across. Earlier discussion made the point that to understand others and to be understood to the extent that is beyond a minimum level, i.e. where connotations and implications become significant, one has to be able to know how attitudes and points of view are stated and how relationships are signalled in the cultural system that he or she is in contact with. Given that language is the major and the most sophisticated means of communication, it means that knowing what to say and how to say things appropriately is very important if communication is to be effective and is to produce real understanding between people. But on the other hand, because meaning is mutually established by the interlocutors through interactions, and in an intercultural situation, interlocutors have to communicate on the interface of different linguistic and cultural systems, there are knowledge and skills other than linguistic that one must have in order to communicate successfully.

Language is at the very centre of communication activities (Here I refer only to linguistic systems, not other forms of language such as fine arts, music, or computer language). What I mean is that however motivated, whatever the goals intended, without the means of language, the highly developed symbolic system, it is very unlikely that individuals would be able to convey fully their thoughts and feelings, hence to achieve shared meanings in a comprehensive manner, Taylor's work illustrates this clearly with a lot of detail (2006). Moreover, according to Giles and Johnson, the importance of language to communication should also be appreciated from the perspective that language acts as a distinctive marker of ethnic/social identity in social interactions, and therefore it affects the communication process in terms of communication strategy (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey, 1988). This does not mean that

non-verbal symbols are less important. But as this study aims mainly to understand language teaching and learning, and also for the purpose of simplifying the matter, non-verbal aspect of communication is implied in general except where explicitness is needed. From this perspective, the view taken here is that the ability to use language effectively is important to successful communication.

However, it does not follow automatically that to be linguistically competent is to be effective in communication, nor does that an imperfect mastery of a linguistic system will necessarily end up with communication failure or dissatisfaction. As we shall see in the following discussion, much more is needed in terms of knowledge and skills for intercultural communication. In the remaining part of this section, I will review briefly the sociolinguistic aspect of language use, and the discussion in the next section will be on communication competence in a wider perspective: the impact of intercultural context on the process of intercultural communication and the different facets of knowledge and skills required for effective communication.

To start with, as a symbolic system, language does not operate independently in social interactions. Rather, as shown by many scholars such as Hymes, Firth, Halliday, and others, language use is fundamentally influenced by social systems or culture in terms of social rules and norms for language use. For instance, Hymes (1974) emphasises that our language behaviours are regulated by sociolinguistic rules in regard to what is appropriate and what is not in accordance with situation context. For Halliday (1978) meaning resides in the interactions of situation and behaviour, and thus on the one hand what we say and how we say things is decided by how we perceive the social contexts that we are in; and on the other hand "the context in which meanings are exchanged are not devoid of social value" (Berns, 1990:20). So to be appropriate in social interactions, one has to understand the meanings attached to various social roles, social relationships and other situational factors, and abide by the rules of social behaviours. Say, the way people behave as friends at a party would be very different from that between a superior and a subordinate in the workplace, and the differences are derived basically from the shared understanding of the social roles, relationships and social context, which reflect the values and beliefs held collectively by the members of a social group. Obviously, knowledge and skills of this sort are indispensable for effective social functions, and therefore an essential ingredient for successful communication.

Due to significant differences between cultures in terms of assumptions and behaviours, this poses a serious challenge for intercultural communication. Given that both linguistic and sociocultural systems are so wide and complex, it seems unrealistic to expect people outside a speech community, or from the language learning perspective, people learning another language/culture, to acquire all the knowledge and skills that the native speaker possesses. As Hymes' (1974) study shows, there is a fundamental difference between how foreign language and first language are learnt. In first language acquisition, people learn from very early on in life through socialisation not only the linguistic forms of how to say things, but at the same time also the rules and norms concerning what it is appropriate to say in relation to social situations, which reflect the values and beliefs hold by the native community, and this process goes on all the time. The environment for foreign language learning however, is quite different. Foreign language learning often occurs in formal educational settings where the scope of learning is limited, and where there is insufficient opportunity for personal experience of how the language is used.

Berns (1990) pointed out that Hymes' study enables us to see an important difference between first language acquisition and second language learning, and the need to address the social aspect of language activities. Traditionally, the emphasis of foreign language learning was, and now in some cases still is, tilted towards acquisition of linguistic forms, paying little attention to the aspect of sociolinguistics, though there has been a dramatic change since the introduction of the communicative approach and much more attention has been paid to the social aspect of language activities. But in terms of language competence development, perhaps it is not an overstatement that the native speakers' competence is almost beyond the language learner, at least, for the majority learners.

But as our earlier discussion suggests, intercultural communication is difficult not only due to linguistic and sociolinguistic barriers, but also due to the consequence of intergroup perception and interaction. From this perspective, Byram (1989; 1997a) contends that in addition to linguistic and sociolinguistic competences, there is also the need for language education to address some important intercultural phenomena, such as intergroup relationships and the complex of social contextual situations. He points out that so far language education has failed to address adequately these issues, which are not only crucial for effective intercultural communication, but also have important educational values. Partly due to the complex nature of intercultural communication and

interaction, which sets challenges to education, and partly because of being an almost unattainable target for the language learner, he also argues against the concept of setting the native speaker's competence as the standards for foreign language/cultural learning (Ibid). This will be discussed later, but for our present discussion, these arguments bring our attention to the point that as people from different culture backgrounds bring to the intercultural interactions different frames of reference and different social identities, the context of interaction is far more complex than that of intracultural interactions (assuming that the context is homogeneous). Therefore unless attention is paid to these differences, effectiveness in intercultural communication is hard to achieve.

It seems to go without saying that the more you are familiar with a language and culture, the better you will be able to understand others and express yourself clearly, hence to communicate more effectively. From this point of view, insufficient linguistic and sociolinguistic competence certainly hinders communication. However, effective communication is not based solely on knowing exactly what to say or the best ways of saying things; if so, all but a few foreign language learners would be condemned to failure, and the picture for communication in multicultural contexts, or between people of various cultural backgrounds, which is very common nowadays, would be bleak. In fact, due to the elusive nature of language, even between people who share the same language and culture, there are constantly the needs for negotiation of meanings. No doubt, better linguistic and sociolinguistic competence are essential to effective communication, but as communication is fundamentally interactive human behaviours between individuals, effectiveness is also very much dependent upon how the two sides of the communication perceive each other and how much effort they are willing to make to understand each other and to accommodate differences.

There is also a range of knowledge and skills which are thought to be essential for enhancing communication effectiveness, such as the skills for handling ambiguity, relationships, and insufficiency in knowledge/skills, etc. (Byram, 1997a; Gudykunst, 1995; 2003; Spitzberg and Cupach, 1984; Ting-Toomey, 1999). Thus not being able to be precise and accurate in expressing and interpreting meanings can be compensated somehow if both sides are well motivated and have as well the abilities to manage the communication process. For instance, Seidlhofer (online) suggests that in lingua franca conversation, as both sides feel uncertain about the conventions or norms they tend to exercise caution in behaviour and make effort to establish common ground. Meierkord's research on communication in lingua franca situation suggests that a willingness to

tolerate ambiguity and to find a solution is a very important element of successful communication (Grzera, 2005). Also, as my data analysis shows, as well as being willing to negotiate shared grounds, flexibility is also a key factor to successful intercultural communication. In other words, with right motivations and the necessary knowledge and skills communicators would be able to build up together cooperative relationships and common ground for interaction. So next, I will look into the different facets that are related to the management of the communication process.

3.1.3. Managing the Process of Intercultural Communication

Recognising that affect plays a vital role in intercultural communication, many studies emphasise the importance of managing the emotional aspect of communication, such as the intergroup anxiety and intergroup interaction theory by Stephan and Stephan (1992), the anxiety/uncertainty management theory by Gudykunst (1995), and face-negotiation theory by Ting-Toomey (1999). Gudykunst (1995) points out that when people are interacting with culturally different others they would have difficulties in predicting their attitudes, feelings and behaviours, and subsequently experience uncertainty and anxiety. To be able to manage these negative emotions is essential to successful intercultural communication. The discussion in the preceding chapter about how perception and motivation are affected by emotional responses of individuals in intercultural encounters enable us to see why great importance has to be placed on managing negative affect. But to be able to deal with it requires a clear understanding of its causes.

In their theory on intergroup anxiety and intergroup relationship Stephan and Stephan (1992) argue that intergroup anxiety basically stems from four types of feared consequences. Two of them can be regarded as being related to the issues of social identities and group membership, and these are "negative evaluation by outgroup members (e.g. negative stereotyping and disdain)" and "negative evaluation by ingroup members (e.g. disapproval or rejection for having contact with outgroup)" (1992:89-90). These clearly reflect the point that self identification and group memberships are major factors of intergroup encounters and that they impact significantly on relationship with outgroups. The other two are identified as "negative psychological consequences (e.g. frustration, loss of control)" and "negative behavioral consequences (e.g. exploitation, verbal derogation)" (1992), which are negative emotional reactions to unknown situations and/or to undesirable outcomes of intergroup encounters. Clearly, this shows

the importance of feeling in control of situations, and can be related to 'locus of control' theory. As far as the causes of intercultural anxieties are concerned, this model provides us with a clear explanation of how and why anxieties occur.

From the perspective of anxiety reduction, Stephan and Stephan suggest that factors of prior intergroup relations, prior intergroup cognitions and situational factors have to be understood if intercultural interaction is to be effective, as the interactions between these factors form contexts of interaction, and are therefore concerned with anxiety management (1992). Prior intergroup relations, in their view, include factors such as condition of contact, group status, and attitudes towards outgroups, and prior intergroup cognitions are thought to include factors like knowledge of the outgroup, and some intergroup phenomena such as stereotyping, ethnocentrism, etc., and these are mediated through, and also influenced by situational factors, which are defined as "degree of structure, type of interdependence, and group composition." (1992:91)

Thus management of anxiety depends on how the contact situation is perceived by individuals. As far as intergroup factors are concerned, it is now known that through the process of social categorisation and self identification, individuals establish a structured understanding of the relative places they and their interactants possess in the society and the relationship in between (Oakes, 2003), but the information individuals filter through in the process of categorisation and identification is the result of how they perceive the relationship between the self and the other and condition of communication.

For example, research shows that if individuals perceive the situational context of their interactions with others to be cooperative, they would be more likely to experience positive moods, hence to be positively motivated, and vice versa (Brewer and Gaertner, 2003; Stephan and Stephan, 1992).

From a somewhat different angle, studies also suggest that when individuals feel that their expected self-perceptions are confirmed and positively received by their interactants, their intergroup anxieties would subsequently be reduced, hence more likely to be cooperative with the other (e.g. Stephan and Stephan, 1992). There are also other situational factors that could affect anxiety levels such as the relative social or group statuses discussed in the preceding chapter, and the objectives of the communication.

But whether situational contexts are perceived to be cooperative or competitive, friendly or not so friendly, even confrontational is to a large degree dependent upon

individuals' own interpretations. Similarly, whether or not one's self-perceptions are confirmed is also subjective. The problem for intercultural communication is, as has become familiar now, that communicators from different cultural background could have very different interpretations of the same situational context due to having different cultural frames of reference, yet when encountering culturally different others they may have little idea that there exist different, nonetheless equally legitimate interpretations of social reality. Without an understanding of this nature of intercultural communication, people would tend to act in an ethnocentric fashion. Equally, without some knowledge of the culture that one is in contact with, such as its language, communication patterns, and the associated system of values and beliefs, there would be necessarily misconceptions. As both of these aspects contribute to emotional disturbance, so anxiety and uncertainty are seen as closely associated with and dependent upon two types of knowledge and skills: first, an understanding of and the abilities to deal with the complexity of intercultural communication; and secondly, the knowledge of and the skills to interact with the specific culture that one encounters.

Having had a close look at why and how intercultural anxieties occur, we can now move to the next stage of how to deal with this issue. I will start with how to manage identity related issues, which are central to developing abilities of handling both intergroup relations and cross-cultural information exchange. Collier emphasises that identity emerges through the process of interacting with others, and due to the very fact that identity is co-constructed together by the participants and the subjective nature of cognition, identities can be understood as the outcomes of a continuous negotiation of meanings (Wiseman, 2002). From this perspective, to be successful in managing cultural identities and intergroup relations involves first of all a willingness to accept different interpretations of the world reality and a willingness to make adjustments in terms of thinking and behaving. On the other hand, it requires also the abilities to show this willingness and the flexibility to accommodate and/ or to adapt to the differences perceived, which involves a wide range of knowledge and skills.

To be willing to accept different cultural views would mean stepping out of one's ethnocentric position. According to Bennett: "[C]entral to any intercultural communication skill is the ability to experience some aspect of reality differently from what is "given" by one's own culture" (1993:53). It is believed that cultural awareness development is an important step towards change in attitude, as "[A]wareness that one is a product of one's own socialisation is a pre-condition for understanding one's

reactions to otherness." (Byram, 1997a:52) Therefore knowing that their own interpretation of the world is but one way of thinking and behaving, and that exactly because of this reason it is wrong to judge others on the basis of one's own standards, offers people a different angle of thinking and an opportunity to be reflective about their own cultural perspective. This awareness could encourage them to take into account different views and to re-interpret their interactive situations from a wider perspective. Ethnocentrism is closely related to the rigid categorisation of "us" and "them", and thus a willingness to accept cultural differences and to consider different cultural views in a non-judgemental way could also encourage people to go beyond a simple "us" and "them" division and subsequently rely less heavily on cultural stereotypes.

Nevertheless, it is pointed out that just being positive in attitude will not create the ideal conditions for intercultural learning, and what are also required as essential qualities for such learning should be that of curiosity and openness. (Byram, 1997a) Being curious and open reflects a desire to explore and a readiness to face the unknown, and it is like keeping an open door to new ideas and challenges. It is believed that such attitudes could encourage individuals to venture into unknown territory and to engage in discovering about the 'stranger', culturally different individuals, and the differences between themselves and the stranger (Byram, 1997a). Such attitudes could encourage people to learn from and to cooperate with each other in order to establish mutual understanding. It is argued that attitudes like these are very important for the development of cooperative relationships, which in turn could facilitate negotiations of shared meanings.

On the other hand, since meaning is created through interactions, to convey the willingness, and to engage in establishing constructive relations requires also the knowledge and skills to do so. Given that misconceptions of each other would easily occur in intercultural communication, it is crucial that people should be encouraged to exercise great sensitivity in their actions and reactions in intercultural encounters. Studies show that due to the sensitive nature of self-perceptions and cultural identities even well-meaning behaviours could result in serious misunderstanding. For instance, Holliday *et al.* (2004) illustrate that when acting on the basis of their own assumptions of others, even with their best intentions, people could end up with the results which are exactly what they wish to avoid. Not taking into consideration how your interactants view themselves and their expectations, acting simply on how you perceive them and what you believe to be their expectations, often on the basis of stereotypes, could mean

failures in addressing the important needs of your interactants, such as desired self-perceptions, personal objectives, etc. To avoid falling into the trap of stereotyping or acting ethnocentrically, it is fundamental that individuals have the knowledge and skills to act sensitively, which entails some understanding of the other's perspective.

There is a common consensus that knowing the complex nature of intercultural communication and how to act mindfully is crucial for constructive relationships and smooth interactions (e.g. Byram, 1997a; Gudykunst, 1998; Gudykunst and Kim, 2003; Spitzberg and Cupach, 1984; Ting-Toomey, 1999). Knowledge of this sort includes a readiness to be flexible in encountering different cultures, knowing how to attend identity needs both on the parts of the other and the self, how to accommodate the needs for face, and how to access new information and negotiate meanings. For instance, differences in concept of power distance between cultures result in different ways of conceptualising relational identities, and being aware of the existence of different social structures between cultures would to some extent help in reducing uncertainties and anxieties and enable individuals to act more carefully with culturally different others, even though they may have limited knowledge of the rules and norms of social behaviour of the culture/s involved.

On the other hand, as positive self image is one of the most important concerns of individuals and central to self-perceptions and interactive relationships, being able to handle the issue of face is believed to be also very important to identity management, because face, in Ting-Toomey and Oetzel's words, "is associated with identity respect, disrespect, dignity, honor, shame, guilt, status, and competence issues." (2002:145) Although concern for positive face is believed to be universal (Ting-Toomey, 1999), nonetheless, as we saw in the last chapter, in terms of facework, different cultures have different ways of doing it: some preferring self-face-approval-seeking interaction strategies, while others favouring other-face-approval-enhancement interaction strategies. Given that it is often the case that intercultural communicators do not have sufficient knowledge of their interactants' culture, unless they are prepared to be open-minded and able to show flexibilities in their interactions, anxieties and misinterpretations could easily lead to breakdowns in communication.

So, as suggested by Ting-Toomey (1999), an important aspect of knowledge and skills for managing identity issues is that of knowing how to act and react mindfully in intercultural interactions. On the basis of Langer's concept of 'mindfulness' Ting-

Toomey suggests that mindfulness entails careful listening and observation, careful about others' feelings and the consequences of one's own behaviours. It means being able to shift one's frame of reference, to recreate one's social categories and to apply new approaches in coping with different social situations, and the outcomes of being mindful are the feelings of being understood, being respected, and being supported, which could help to maintain and enhance intergroup relationships.

But to be able to understand and satisfy the other's needs and wants, hence to coordinate in interactions requires also the abilities to gain insights into the other's expectations both in terms of identities and personal goals, and also to learn about different ways of behaving. Given that it is the norm for intercultural communicators to encounter unfamiliar views and behaviours, it is conceivable that constant learning is necessary. The importance of learning has been addressed by different researchers from different perspectives. For example, for Byram (1997a), an important component of intercultural competence is the skills of discovery and interaction, which involve observing and identifying significant references in a new culture for social relations and behaviours, and these are essential for increasing accuracy in predicting the other's expectations and identity needs. What is also in his concept of skills of discovery and interaction is a dimension of self reflection, which emphasises raising self awareness through learning about different views and ideas. It is believed that this could enable people to look at the new culture with empathy, hence reducing stereotyping.

From a different angle, but in a similar vein, Ting-Toomey's concept of identity negotiation also addresses the issue of learning other perspectives. The identity negotiation approach emphasises achieving mutual understanding through engaging both sides in constructing shared meanings. The most essential part of this approach is to understand and take into account different perspectives so as to accommodate the identity needs of both sides. In doing so, individuals are expected to seek actively new information about their interactants in a sensitive manner, which is described as including: "values' clarification skills, mindful observation skills, mindful listening skills, verbal empathy skills, non-verbal sensitivity skills, identity support skills, reframing skills, facework management skills, collaborative dialogue skills, and transcultural competences skills." (1999:53) Through applying these skills in their interactions with culturally different others, individuals are expected to learn about and therefore to be able to communicate more effectively with the culturally different others.

Of course, the most obvious knowledge and skills required for communication is that of language and culture, and without knowledge of this sort, communication cannot be expected to reach great depth. So inevitably, apart from the knowledge and skills to handle the process of intercultural communication, it is also necessary to learn about the specific culture/s one is interacting with. More will be said on this later. In this section, we have established the basis of what is considered essential for successful intercultural communication, and in the next section we will look into the issues of conceptualisation of and criteria for developing the competence for intercultural communication.

3.2. Competence for Intercultural Communication: Conceptualisation and Criteria

We have now examined the major factors that affect the process and outcomes of intercultural communication, and this enables us to understand generally the issues concerning conceptualisation of the competence for intercultural communication, i.e., how the process of intercultural communication is influenced by the cognitive and emotional difficulties resulting from differences in cultural identity needs, frames of reference, and behaviours. It is clear by now that to be competent in intercultural communication entails necessarily an understanding of the complexity of intercultural communication and the abilities to manage anxieties and uncertainties on the one hand, and relations and interactions with culturally different others on the other hand. On the basis of this understanding, we can now come to the issue of conceptualisation of the competence for intercultural communication. But first of all, it is necessary to clarify the terms that I am going to use.

3.2.1. Intercultural Communication Competence, Intercultural Communicative Competence, and Intercultural Competence

According to Wiseman (2002), competence for intercultural communication has been conceptualised in various ways, such as cross-cultural adjustment, cross-cultural adaptation, cross-cultural effectiveness, intercultural understanding, overseas success, personal growth/adjustment, etc., which reflect different theoretical orientations and different focuses of these studies. The lack of consensus in intercultural studies about terminology can also be seen from Deardorff's (2006) recent survey of definitions of intercultural competence, which shows a variety of views. It appears that the three different terms mentioned in the title are often used to mean the same thing, and on the other hand, the same term could mean different things for different people, and so far there are no strict distinctions between them. For instance, for Fantini (2000)

intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence are synonymous. Also, there doesn't seem to be a significant difference between the definition given for intercultural competence by Byram (Deardorff, 2006) and that for intercultural communication competence provided by Wiseman (2002), although the former is more specific while the latter is more general. The former is defined as "Knowledge of others; knowledge of self, skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others' values, beliefs, and behaviours; and relativizing one's self. Linguistic competence plays a key role" (Deardorff, 2006:247), and the latter as "involves the knowledge, motivation, and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures." (2006:208) As we can see, there is hardly any difference in nature between the conceptualisations of the two terms. These can be seen as evidence that the two terms mean more or less the same thing.

Also, for some scholars the term of intercultural communicative competence is used to signify an association with the language aspect of communication, and it implies an educational concern for promoting personal growth (Byram, 1997a), which goes beyond the usual concern of intercultural communication in a more strict sense. The term intercultural communication competence, however, is often used with the implication of the abilities to adapt to interactions between people of differing cultural backgrounds, and is widely used in the fields of intercultural communication studies.

The link between the term intercultural communicative competence and the language aspect of communication has been explicit or implicit. For example, the term is applied deliberately by Byram to maintain "a link with recent traditions in foreign language teaching, but to expand the concept of 'communicative competence' in significant ways." (1997a:3) That is, this term is used to imply a competence that goes beyond what is known as sociolinguistic ability, and to include the abilities that are necessary for the learner to cope with the complexity of intercultural interactions as well as a positive attitudes towards differences. Another example of emphasising this link can be seen from Baxter, who argues for an inclusion of a component of intercultural training in "the existing fabric of English teaching" and expounds that "intercultural communicative competence can be seen to include essential cognitive and affective dimensions, in addition to the behavioral." (1983:311) Likewise, in his definition of intercultural communicative competence, Johnson explicates that intercultural communication competence should be understood as "cultural mindedness", which is regarded as a "metacompetence" to facilitate the communication process between

people from differing cultures; and intercultural communicative competence should be understood, on the other hand, as applying the "cultural mindedness" in language activities, thus "the ability to explicitly think about and adapt language use and communication to different cultural situations." (2003:192)

However, it seems that this difference is not always recognised, and the terms are often used without discrimination. It seems also the case that language competence is sometimes taken for granted when discussion is made about intercultural communication competence. To have this lengthy discussion about the terms is because of two reasons. One is to have a brief idea of how these terms are used so as to enable me to compare and draw on from different studies, and the other is my intention to distinguish the two terms that I will adopt in my writing, intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence, with the latter being closely associated with language teaching and learning, and the former with a very broad definition as the competence to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures.

3.2.2. Criteria for Successful Intercultural Communication

What are the fundamental differences that separate those who are perceived to be competent in intercultural communication from those who are not? The answer provided by Spitzberg and Cupach is that the competent communicator is the one who is able to interact in a manner that is both appropriate to the context and effective in fulfilling the intended objectives of the interaction (1984). This view is commonly accepted, and as literature shows, the criteria of appropriateness and effectiveness have been adopted in intercultural studies as the fundamental criteria for judging intercultural competence. Appropriateness basically means that the behaviours of the communicator have to meet situational requirements, not violating what is expected in terms of behavioural rules and norms in a given social context. As different situations give rise to different sets of rules, following Spitzberg and Cupach (ibid.), a message or an action perceived appropriate in one social context may not be perceived so in a different one. Therefore to be appropriate entails the abilities to understand clearly the context of interaction and subsequently to enact behaviours that are either expected or perceived as acceptable in that situation.

Effectiveness is referred to as the abilities to achieve the intended goals, and in Spitzberg and Cupach's words, it is "successful adaptation to or resolution of interpersonal problematic situations and the achievement of intended or desirable results

through communication" (1984:103). Communication goals vary from case to case, some function oriented, and some relation oriented, and situations of interactions also differ greatly. Therefore to be effective in communication implies being able to identify correctly the intended communication goals and having the knowledge and skills to achieve them through social interactions.

It is believed that it is possible to achieve effectiveness in terms of obtaining the intended goals without being perceived appropriate, and conversely, one can be perceived as appropriate without being able to achieve what is desired (ibid.). But neither is counted as competent communication. To demonstrate the different outcomes, Spitzberg came up with a model showing four different communication forms, which is presented by Wiseman (2002) as below. Although it is a bit simplistic, as pointed out by Wiseman, it illustrates well the impact of different factors on communication outcomes:

> 1. *Minimizing* communication is both inappropriate and ineffective and would obviously be of a low communicative quality.
> 2. *Sufficing* communication is appropriate but ineffective; that is, it is highly accommodating and does nothing objectionable but also accomplishes no personal objectives. Here Spitzberg suggested that the sufficing style is sufficient to meet the basic demands of the context, but it accomplishes nothing more.
> 3. *Maximizing* communication occurs when an individual is effective in achieving personal goals but at the cost of being highly inappropriate contextually. This style may include verbal aggression, Machiavellian behaviour, deception, the infringement of others' rights, or the degradation of others.
> 4. *Optimizing* communication occurs when interactants simultaneously achieve their personal goals and fulfil the normative expectations of the context. (2002:209-10)

This shows that interculturally competent behaviour has to meet the criteria of being both appropriate and effective. But what does that entails in terms of competence development? The next section will try to address the issue.

3.2.3. Motivation, Knowledge, and Skills – the Three Components of Intercultural Competence

After a thorough review on various competences relevant to interpersonal and intergroup interactions and communication, and the processes of their development, Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) identified three components of the competence for intercultural communication, which are: motivation, knowledge, and skills, reflecting correspondingly the functioning of affective, cognitive and behavioural aspects of the communication process. This three-component model has been widely accepted and adopted in the fields of intercultural studies. (Wiseman, 2002) The components are not

separate elements, but rather in a relationship of interdependence and being mutually influencing, which reflects on our earlier discussion on the interactive relations of affect, cognition and behaviour. Nevertheless, this does not mean that a state or a change in one aspect will necessarily be reflected in the same way in other aspects. For instance, it is pointed out that some people may be well motivated to communicate with culturally different others, but lack the necessary knowledge and skills to do so, while some other people may have the knowledge and skills, but are poorly motivated (Gudykunst and Kim, 2003). In neither case will communication be effective. This shows that to be competent in intercultural communication one needs to be well motivated as well as to have the necessary knowledge and skills to handle various aspects of the communication process. This conceptualisation provides a holistic view of the issue and a useful framework to address different aspects in a coherent manner.

This framework will enable us to examine in detail the three components in terms of how they are conceptualised and their implications for the assessment and development of the competence.

Motivation, alternatively conceptualised as attitudes (Byram, 1997a), addresses the affective aspect of interpersonal communication. It refers to the desire or intention to get involved in interactions with others. Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) contend that whether one is motivated to encounter others depends on various factors, contextual as well as objective-oriented. They maintain that while an individual's judgement on approach or avoidance is very much decided by whether his/her objectives are met, this judgement is, nevertheless, contextual and also changeable along with the process of interactions with others (conversational episode). It thus means motivation is affected by continual appraisals by an individual regarding both the progress of the interactions in terms of relationships, expectations, and the prospect of achieving the desired goals. As attitudinal aspect is closely related to cognition and behaviour, it has been a focal point of many studies concerning intergroup or intercultural relations and interactions. For example, it has been taken as a precursor or indicator of potential or stages of development in intercultural competence in works such as the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (Van Oudenhoven, and Van der Zee, 2002) and Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1993), which will be used as a model for assessment of intercultural competence.

How individuals appraise their situations of interactions with others, according to Wiseman (2002), is influenced by a variety of factors such as anxiety, perceived social distance, attraction, ethnocentrism, prejudice, etc. Thus a development in terms of motivational change means first of all to get over negative emotions and attitudes in general, and to reduce ethnocentric thinking in particular. To reduce ethnocentrism is central to attitudinal change, as it is a common phenomenon that we all tend to use our own culture as a "filter" (Begley, 2003) to view the world around us, hence to interpret meanings in accordance with our own cultural frames of reference. To promote attitudinal change, according to Byram, involves predominantly developing the abilities to 'decentre', to have the willingness to "engage with otherness in a relationship of equality" (1997a:50) through discovering other perspectives and suspending one's own cultural presumptions and being open to new perspectives. Based on the same principle but from a different perspective, Ting-Toomey argues for an identity negotiation approach, with which attitudinal change is encouraged through paying close attention to the identity needs of others, such as security, inclusion, trust, connection, etc., and being reflexively aware of one's own ethnocentric tendencies (1999). The core of this approach is to practise mindfulness in reaction to cultural differences.

The concept of being mindful in thinking and action is also very much at the centre of the anxiety management approach. With the viewpoint that motivation is profoundly affected by the satisfaction of one's needs for security, predictability, inclusion, and self-concepts, Gudykunst and Kim (2003) focus more specifically on the influence of these factors on motivation. Thus their approach to the motivation issue is to concentrate on the aspect of managing uncertainty and anxiety, and to achieve this one needs to act mindfully in terms of recognising and supporting different identity needs, and actively seeking new meanings of the world reality when interacting with culturally different others, or "strangers" in their parlance.

Whether focusing on decentring, identity needs, or individuals' satisfaction with the process of the communication, these scholars emphasise the same message: a motivated individual is the one who keeps an open mind to different views and ideas, and would be willing to discover and accommodate differences between him/herself and the culturally different others.

The knowledge component is broadly defined by Spitzberg and Cupach as "the possession of, or ability creatively to acquire, the requisite cognitive information

necessary to implement conversationally competent behaviours in an interpersonal context" (1984:123). This has been further elaborated by others. For instance, Gudykunst and Kim (2003) suggest that this component consists of several different aspects of knowledge, namely, knowledge of how to gather information, knowledge of group differences, knowledge of personal similarities, and knowledge of alternative interpretations. With fundamentally the same stance in regard to what one needs to know to communicate competently in intercultural contexts, Byram offers the viewpoint that this component can be seen as being formed of two broad categories of knowledge: "knowledge about social groups and their cultures in one's own country, and similar knowledge of the interlocutor's country on the one hand; knowledge of the processes of interaction at individual and societal levels, on the other hand." (1997a:35).

However, a difference exists in regard to how language is perceived between Gudykunst and Kim's approach and Byram's approach. Both emphasise the importance of mediation and careful interaction. However, what dominates Gudykunst and Kim's approach, it appears, is the development of a meta-competence to handle unfamiliar situations of intercultural communication in general, which gives little mention of language competence. Based on the view that one may meet and interact with people with varying cultural backgrounds in their work and life, and it is simply impossible to learn all these cultures in depth, the solution therefore, suggested by their approach, is to know how to access and process information about others in accordance with their cultural tendencies, and subsequently to decide what strategies to take and what behaviours to enact. So for them it is paramount to have the knowledge to gain access to information of the others through such means as passive observation, active inquiry and interaction; the knowledge to distinguish the similarities and differences between self and other, both on group-level, which entails the dimensions of culture variety, and individual-level, which includes personal orientations and individual social conditions; and finally being able to act mindfully in accordance with the situation one is in. (Gudykunst and Kim, 2003) To accommodate the unpredictable circumstances of intercultural communication, this is no doubt, very important, but from my perspective, given the role that language plays in managing information inquiry and interactions, this certainly downplays the significance of language competence.

From the perspective of language education, Byram's approach is to incorporate language and culture learning with the view to promote the development of intercultural communicative competence. Recognising that language learners will probably have to

use their linguistic skills in various cultural contexts, and also they will meet people of varying cultural backgrounds in their life, he contends that language education should prepare the learner to develop the competence to face such situations. Based on this view, he also places emphasis on learning how to access new information like Gudykunst and Kim. He proposes that it is necessary to develop the skills to discover and interpret different meanings and behaviours, to know the importance of exercising empathetic thinking and to be accommodative in interactions with culturally different others. Nevertheless, language is at the centre of this approach and thus forms the important part of the body of knowledge. The aim of the learning is to develop intercultural communicative competence, and this accentuates the point that successful communication requires both the specific knowledge of a culture – its values, beliefs, behavioural norms, verbal and non-verbal, and the general knowledge for discovering new information, and for managing intergroup and interpersonal relations and interactions.

Language – the communication tool – is taken for granted in Gudykunst and Kim's approach. Indeed, being able to handle communications with members of varying cultural groups is very important nowadays and essential for many people working and travelling internationally. Yet, as pointed out earlier, without language competence, it is not very likely that communication can get into much depth. Thus the concept of knowing how to gather information, especially through interaction, must be based on the assumption that the two sides have a shared means to communicate, a language presumably, to whatever degree. Therefore, a main reason for not including language competence as an indispensable part of knowledge requirement in their model may be due to the fact that most of the people involved in intercultural communication either have some competence in a foreign language which enable them to communicate, e.g. English as lingua franca in most cases, or have the good fortune of being able to rely on linguistic assistance. In either case, language competence does not need to be the immediate concern. Yet, there is another reason to it, that is, language learning is time-consuming, so when the aim of the learning is to interact with people of all sorts of cultural backgrounds, to be linguistically competent in all cultures is out of the question. However, the point is, without language competence, other aspects of knowledge can not be expected to function effectively.

The language and culture learning approach is different in this respect. As expected, the target language and the culture of which the language is a part are what

the learner is expected to learn. But it is shown explicitly in Byram's model that what the learner needs to know is not simply how the members of the target culture group behave linguistically and non-linguistically in their normal social interactions. To be interculturally competent, the model stresses, the learner needs to understand also how differently members of the target culture group and members of his/her own culture group identity themselves, and the implications of the differences in terms of establishing and maintaining relationships and in terms of managing interactive behaviours. Reflecting the complexity of intercultural interaction, what is emphasised in Byram's model is a concept of the intercultural speaker, which implies that the learner not only has the right to choose the way he/she presents his/her identities in interaction, but also knows how to show respect to others' choice in their interactions (1997a).

A difference between what may be call the general approach and the language and culture learning approach is that the general approach resorts to an understanding of the general difference patterns between cultures. It is argued that by applying the dimensions of cultural variability people can "develop a preliminary understanding of the real differences between our cultures and other cultures" (Gudykunst and Kim, 2003:281). This understanding would help people to avoid acting in an ethnocentric manner. The dimensions of cultural variability can thus serve as a useful guidance to interactions with other cultures in terms of expectations, strategies and behaviours. The language and cultural learning seems to go the opposite direction, by comparing the target culture and own culture, the learner can develop a self awareness as well as an awareness of the target culture, and this awareness could lead to better decisions in strategies and behaviours.

The role of language deserves to be recognised also due to the reason that it serves as an important identity marker, and it can be used to signal social status and attitudes (e.g. Abrams *et al.*, 2002; Byram, 1997a; Ting-Toomey, 1999). This will be discussed again in more detail in the next section. Based on her identity negotiation theory, Ting-Toomey takes the view that language is an important aspect of cultural identity, and consequently essential to managing the communication process. So she includes managing language behaviours as one of the factors forming the knowledge component in her A Mindful Intercultural Communication Model. For her, the knowledge component includes the following factors: cultural/personal values; language and verbal communication; non-verbal communication; in-group and out-group boundary; conflict management; relationship development; and intercultural adaptation.

Having examined the attitudes/motivation and knowledge components, the discussion will turn to the aspect of skills requirement for the operation of intercultural communication. Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) point out that one may have the motivation and knows what needs to be done, yet could still find it difficult to enact the desired behavioural sequences if he/she lacks the skills, so this aspect is just as important as the others. It will be shown in the data analysis the impact of lacking the skills to reach out for different perspectives.

A comparison of the three models mentioned above, Gudykunst and Kim's model, Byram's model, and Ting-Toomey's model, reveals some differences in categorising skills. The major difference, however, appears to be that in Byram's model, communication implies more explicitly both face-to-face communication and communication in other forms, i.e., written and aural, covering a wide range of communication activities, while the other two models do not seem to address explicitly other forms of communication than face-to-face mode. However, none of them pay explicit attention to the development of online communication, which, according to some research, has had clear impact on the way communication is carried out in some areas, such as business communication. (e.g. Gimenez, 2000; Louhiala-Salminen, 1996)

Although the ways these models categorise and formulate the skills differently, yet from different perspectives, they all attend to the core issues of intercultural communication, i.e., identity related issues and skill deficiency. In all the three models emphasis can found on participation, empathy, relationship management, and mutual understanding and satisfaction. With focus on face-to-face interaction, the two models by Ting-Toomey and by Gudykunst and Kim respectively seem to place emphasis almost entirely on skills for direct interactive behaviours, which, no doubt, is more complicated and more challenging. It requires the individual to be highly alert to situational demands, such as maintenance of interpersonal relationships, identity needs of both sides, etc., and to be immediately responsive to changes in situation. For instance, from the identity management perspective, Ting-Toomey puts a lot of stress on establishing rapport and being accommodative in action through exercising mindfulness. The skill factors in her list include: mindful observation; mindful listening; verbal empathy; non-verbal sensitivity; mindful stereotyping; constructive conflict skills; and flexible adaptive skills.

As well as emphasising empathy and being accommodative, Gudykunst and Kim also give a lot of attention to how individuals can conduct themselves competently in intercultural communication by having better management of their feelings of anxiety and uncertainty through gaining better understanding of the differences between the others and themselves, as well as understanding the intercultural communication process. The following are the skills they put forth: ability to be mindful; ability to manage anxiety; ability to empathize; ability to adapt one's behaviour; and ability to make accurate predictions and explanations.

In line with these, but with different modes of communication in mind, Byram is less explicit about managing report and anxiety, instead focusing more on the skills to access and interact with different worldviews in a wider perspective, covering both the more spontaneous face-to-face interaction and less time-sensitive modes, i.e., written or audio/video forms of communication. Skills in his model are divided into two categories: skills of interpreting and relating, and skills of discovery and interaction, each with some more specific objectives attached. As said above, all these models attempt to address the core issues of intercultural communication, and from different angles they shed light on the issue of competence formation. From language teaching/learning perspective, what is offered by Byram allows more room for different forms of communication to be addressed.

3.3. Foreign Language Education and Development of Intercultural Competence

Until now the discussion has been focused on issues regarding intercultural communication and the competence required for its successful operation. It has laid the ground for further discussion of language teaching in general, which is one of the aims of this thesis as explained in chapter 1. The discussion will focus on two aspects, developing intercultural competence through foreign language learning in this section, and more importantly, assessment of such a competence in the next chapter. In the following I will look into the issues that are important to the concept of language and culture education and as well as to the language and cultural learning approach. In the rest of the discussion, I will distinguish the terms of intercultural competence (IC) and intercultural communicative competence (ICC), with the latter being associated with the ability to adapt language use to different cultural context. Although the focus of this research is to assess the development of IC, yet it has been my intention to understand this development from the perspective of language education, therefore even though

information from this research in this respect is limited, it will provide some insights into the ICC development of the students.

3.3.1. Why Is It Necessary to Develop IC in Foreign Language Education?

The answer to this question is twofold. First of all, from a broad perspective, the answer to the above question has much to do with our response to the changing world. In the age of globalisation, to interact or communicate interculturally in one way or another is becoming part of our everyday life, hence it is important for all of us – people of all cultures – to develop the confidence and competence to meet each other, to get over the barriers of cultural differences between us and to understand and cooperate with each other. But even more importantly, in this so-called global village, people from all cultures are increasingly becoming dependent on each other, and therefore have to learn to work and live together, understanding and accepting the differences between each of us in terms of thinking and behaving. In their *Learning: the Treasure Within. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century*, Delors *et al.* (1996) say that in order to meet the challenge of the new century, education should provide the learning that would enable individuals to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes "to adapt to a changing, complex and interdependent world" (1996:85). To achieve this aim, they argue, it is necessary to implement in education the concepts of "learning to live together" and "learning to be" as well as the concepts of "learning to know" and "learning to do" - the "four pillars of knowledge" as they call them, which include both social and economic dimensions of individual and societal development. They contend that the knowledge and skills of "learning to live together", as well as that of "learning to be", – which have a focus on personhood development and social responsibility development – have traditionally been left to chance in education, and that in order to maintain peace, harmony, and development of the changing world, and to enable individuals of all races and cultures to adapt to the change, it is becoming an urgent task today that education should take up the challenge and provide opportunities for young people of various backgrounds to develop the attitudes and abilities to make gradual discovery of others, and to work with each other towards common objectives.

There are two important messages in the report. The first one is that in this global age, one has to learn about different cultures and to be able to appreciate cultural diversity in order to live peacefully together. Along with the increased contact between

different nations and cultures, with all its benefits and positive outcomes, there is also the danger of an increase in occurrence of miscommunication, mistrust, and disharmony between different nations and cultures. Obviously, conflict in political and economic interest is a major cause of international or intercultural disharmony, yet, undoubtedly, the role of culture in it is by no means insignificant due to the complex and sensitive nature of intercultural interaction. In fact, culture is the underlying cause of many conflicts. Thus to maintain world peace and for all the people in the world to achieve prosperity, it is the basic condition that we all have to accept and respect each other in terms of cultural difference, and work cooperatively.

The second message is that education has a key role to play in creating a more equal and better world society. On the one hand, it means equal access to education, which will enable all people to bring out their potential and therefore to have a better chance to succeed in life. On the other hand, and more relevant to our present discussion is the point that education should and could provide opportunities for people to develop a greater understanding of the world and a sense of responsibility for the development of the whole society and common interest of mankind. In regard to the previous point, it means serious efforts to prevent or reduce misunderstanding, tensions, and even conflicts, which could easily arise between individuals of different cultural backgrounds or between different ethnic or cultural groups. This can be seen evidently from the increase in cultural as well as ethnic conflict in the present world. To learn how and why misunderstanding should happen would be an important step for individuals to be consciously aware of the tendency and consequences of ethnocentricity; while to learn the differences between self and other in terms of thinking and behaving would be necessary both in terms of cognition and behavioural adaptation in social interactions.

The second part of the answer to the question implies that the intricate intertwined relationship between language and culture places foreign language education in a unique position in promoting understanding between different cultures and in reaching out to otherness. It has been argued (e.g. Johnson, 2003; Risager, 2006) that due to the intimate nature of language and culture, and the fact that language is an important aspect of an individual's cultural identity as well as the most important medium of culture, language learning offers learners a unique opportunity to learn about different world reality, different ways of thinking, and ultimately to expand their world views, as Byram maintains: "FLT (foreign language teaching – note added) however has the experience of otherness at the centre of its concern, as it requires learners to engage with

both familiar and unfamiliar experience through the medium of another language." (1997a:3) It is believed that by way of comparing the similarities and differences between the familiar and unfamiliar, and by bringing different perspectives into the learning experience, language education can offer learners an opportunity to reflect and re-evaluate critically what they have taken for granted, and therefore to gain new insights into their own culture as well as an understanding of other culture/s. (e.g. Byram, 1997a; Byram and Morgan, 1994; Byram and Risager, 1999)

The earlier discussion has shown that the development of the competence for intercultural communication is by nature both cognitive and affective, and it leads to, from the communicative perspective, better adaptation in intercultural encounters. But more importantly, it could have a significant impact on individuals' personal development, and consequently on the development of the society as a whole. It is believed that through introducing different perspectives to learners and encouraging them to evaluate and reflect critically on their own cultural practices and those of others, language learning can make important contributions to the general development of the learner in terms of gaining greater understanding of themselves and their relations with others, thus to be able to understand the world reality from a wider perspective. (e.g. Byram, 1997a; Byram and Morgan, 1994; Byram and Risager, 1999) Also, it is argued that through the means of reflection and evaluation of one's own and other's cultural practices the learning can be useful for the development of critical thinking. (Byram, 1997a; Guilherme, 2000, 2002) This can be seen to be in line with the fundamental aims of general education delineated in the Delors' report in the form of four types of knowledge. In the following, I will look into the reasons on which the argument for an intercultural approach is built.

3.3.2. Are Language and Cultural Competences Acquired Simultaneously?

First of all, language teaching and learning can hardly avoid facing the issue of cultural difference, since each language reflects the unique way in which the culture structures its meaning system. As explained by Kramsch (1998), in terms of meaning making language is intimately linked to culture in two fundamental ways: semantic and grammatical meaning from linguistic signs; and pragmatic meaning from social rules and norms. On the one hand foreign language learners constantly encounter unique sociocultural implications both embedded in the linguistic signs and behind the social rules that regulate language behaviours. But on the other hand, the unique sociocultural

implications of a language system are not obvious for foreign language learners to observe, and could be easily misinterpreted.

To demonstrate this, let's take an example in word connotation, in the 1970s when some Chinese audiences saw in films that workers in some Western countries chanted for milk and bread when holding demonstrations for employment, they were somehow amazed to hear that what was asked for by the jobless were milk and bread. Because instead of being perceived as the very basic necessity of life, the words 'milk' and 'bread' were, and to some degree, still are associated with a good standard of living in the minds of many Chinese people, therefore it left them with an impression that everyone in the industrialised countries led a rather comfortable life. Here due to difference in life style and hence availability, milk and bread have been regarded as something more than everyday necessity, therefore the connotation of these words is somewhat different in the Chinese cultural context from that in the films.

This illustrates how linguistic signs reflect people's perception of the world reality based on their experience of life. While on the other hand some earlier examples given in the previous chapter, such as differences in communication styles, demonstrated how meaning is stated through applying pragmatic rules in social actions in relation to situational contexts. From these one can see an obvious strong link between language behaviour and culture at different levels. The close relationship between the two is summarised succinctly by Johnson (2003) in the following way:

> Cultural frameworks give rise to particular languages, which in turn shape mental processes and the organization of reality, which in turn create cultural frameworks. Cultural frameworks can be renewed, refreshed, and reformulated through ever-changing processes involving language. Hence, thought is relative to language, which is relative to culture. (2003:187)

This description shows clearly the interactive relationship between language and culture. But this does not mean that acquisition of a foreign language will automatically result in an acquisition of the culture involved. To suggest that learning the language would inevitably result in learning the culture means to assume that the bond between the two is inseparable. However, this is mistaken as it fails to recognise the difference between first language learning and foreign/second language learning. Despite the close relationship, language and culture are indeed separable (Byram and Risager, 1999; Risager, 2006).

Firstly, this can be understood from the perspective of how learning happens. Due to a lot of commonalities in human experiences and the ways these experiences are

categorised, there exist a lot of similarities in different languages in terms of semantic and pragmatic meanings. As learning is a process where one's previous experience is constantly drawn upon in comprehending new experiences, the fact that people of different cultural backgrounds have a lot in common enables learners of a new language to draw on the experience they have accumulated through their mother tongue or other language/s for explanations of the new linguistic experiences they encounter. What happens in this process is that only the cultural phenomena that are salient or 'stand out' to catch the learner's attention are paid attention to, become what Agar (1994) described as "rich point", and the part of culture specific meaning that is not readily observable to the learner often escapes the learner's attention. Consequently the cultural vacancy or 'lacuna' (Ertelt-Vieth, 1991) is filled in with the learner's earlier experience of the world reality, which is deeply influenced by their own cultural rules and conventions, and the cultural meaning which is originally attached to the language is missed out.

Secondly, related to the above mentioned reason, there is an important difference between the contexts of inter- and intra-cultural communication. According to Byram and Risager (1999), there is a significant difference between what is termed "the native context", where the language is used as the mother tongue, and "non-native contexts", where the language is used as a foreign language or *lingua franca*. They maintain that what happens when a language being used outside its own cultural context is that the language in question is "recontextualised", where "language and culture are disconnected and reconnected in new ways." (1999:150) In this sense, they argue, language and culture are indeed separated from each other due to the fact that the learner brings with them their own culturally derived meaning potentials, and apply them in accordance with their own interpretation of the context of situation, which differs, sometimes significantly from that of the native's. In her recent book, Risager argues that it is common for language to be "separated from the first language context and, via migration or acquisition/learning, be transferred to a foreign- or second-language context and there undergo a process of change…" (2006:157).

In his semiotic theory, Peirce expresses the idea that the meaning that a sign symbolises can only be understood through another sign the receiver has created in his or her mind – an "interpretant", which is built on the previous experience of the receiver. Because people's experience differs, hence a same sign can evoke different interpretants in different people. (Kramsch, 1999; Taylor 2006) It can be understood from this perspective that when a language is recontextualised the connection that the natives

build in their minds between the language and the culture is severed in the sense that the non-native perceives it differently on the basis of their cultural experience. Based on his third space enunciation theory, Bhabha gives an account of the effect of such a recontextualisation: "[T]he encounter between two cultures always entails a discontinuity in the traditionally continuous time of a person's or a nation's discourse practices" (cited in Kramsch, 1999:47). Thus it is wrong to assume that the non-native context is similar to that of the native. Since context is constructed through the interactions of interlocutors, to understand the context it is necessary to take into account both the native and the learner's perspectives in terms how they use the language in question to negotiate identity, to express attitudes and intentions.

Finally, in terms of language development, Færch *et al.* describe the outcomes of the learning as an interlanguage, which has the features of both the target language and the learner's own language (cited in Byram and Risager, 1999). This interlanguage can be understood not only as the imperfect state of a linguistic competence as far as native standards are concerned, but also as a product of different cultures in interaction. Viewing language use as a dynamic process of negotiation of meanings, such as in Halliday and Hasan's view that "text is language operative in a context of situation" (cited in Kramsch, 1993), one can see that what the learner produces reflects their own understanding of the intercultural context, which, as explained above, is constructed on the basis of both the native and the non-native cultures. Thus in foreign language learning the connection between language and culture established by the native is no longer the same, so it is a mistake to expect that language learning will inevitably result in cultural learning.

3.3.3. Is It Necessary to Integrate Language and Culture Learning?

From both the cognition perspective and the context situation perspective, the above discussion has made the point quite clear that it is wrong to assume that cultural learning and language learning simply go hand in hand. However, it appears quite obvious that through foreign language learning learners do pick up bits and pieces of cultural information, sometimes also good understanding of why the native does things differently, as they learn the language. Corbett shows that there is an argument that "any method of language teaching and learning is inevitably cultural" (2003:34). Although this argument may be made only from the perspective of teaching methodology, nonetheless, it demonstrates a view held by many people that cultural learning is

inevitable when learning another language, since in a language classroom or from reading or seeing documents in a foreign language, learners are often exposed to the cultural practices of a target group, and their attention therefore is drawn to how the native does things. However, this view is untenable for two main reasons: one is that this view is based on a wrong assumption that foreign language learning is no different from first language learning by nature, as has been shown in the previous section; the other one concerns the objectives of learning.

The second issue concerns the role culture plays in achieving the educational objectives of language learning. If culture is treated as no more than information provider, only to be an additional part to language learning, it is then in a sense marginalised. This is to say, the key role culture plays in intercultural communication, in the development of cultural awareness, and in broadening views is not recognised, and consequently, cultural learning is reduced to some sort of dos and don'ts, losing sight of the important objectives of foreign language education. According to Kramsch, culture is seen by some people "as mere information conveyed by the language, not as a feature of language itself" (1993:8). This view of contrasting language and culture does not recognise language as an important part of one's cultural identity, and it means that the psychological aspect of intercultural interaction, such as cultural identity and relationships between interlocutors is not addressed, or paid attention to, which, as pointed out by Byram and colleagues, is at the centre of intercultural communication, and is also one of the major weaknesses of communicative approach (e.g. Byram, 1997a; Byram and Morgan, 1994), an issue that will be discussed in more detail later.

Moreover, viewing culture as a lesser part inevitably results in it being neglected in foreign language learning. Thus, cultural learning is left to happen incidentally. When learners are left to discover for themselves the culture meanings embedded in the target language without being advised or guided, there would be a good chance that some cultural specific features could either be missed out where the differences appear inconspicuous, or, in some occasions, be perceived by the learner as exotic, strange, incomprehensible, or in worse case distasteful when the differences are too obvious to be ignored, thus giving rise to stereotypes and ethnocentric views. It is hard to imagine that this learn-by-accident manner could lead to a deep understanding of the target culture and the nature of intercultural communication. Similarly, if the learner is not encouraged to step out of their own culture to discover different perspectives, they

would be less likely to be interested in other people and to consider different views of the world reality.

Thus the question actually is not simply whether to include the cultural element in foreign language education or not, because as indicated above, learners do pick up some cultural differences through language learning, nevertheless, perhaps only in a superficial and haphazard way, even detrimental sometimes in terms of attitudes and competence development. Rather, the question is if cultural learning is treated as a by-product of language learning, it is inevitable that cultural learning happens only by chance, and instead of developing empathy and intercultural understanding, the learner may end up with having reinforced stereotypes. However, even when some culture phenomena are addressed to some extent, as it is the case of communicative approach, there is still the question of to what extent some important issues, both communicational and educational, are attended to. That is, whether issues such as empathy, critical cultural awareness, social justice and moral responsibilities, etc. can be adequately addressed through the learning when the aim of education is simply to produce a fluent speaker of another language.

This leads the discussion to the next issue – what learning outcomes are to be expected out of foreign language education. Obviously, what to expect out of learning depends a lot on the learning objectives, which vary a lot in accordance with the nature of the learning tasks and the sorts of educational ideology implemented. For instance, some teaching aims are more skill-oriented, others more academic-oriented; some lay more emphasis on political consequences, such as empowerment or social equality, some on personhood development. Instead of having an overall review of the various aspects of foreign language education, what I intend to do below is to look at the issue of foreign language education from the most general perspective, focusing only on some of the issues that are most relevant to the development and assessment of IC and ICC.

3.3.4. Incorporating Intercultural Competence in Foreign Language Education – Theoretical Basis from the Educational and Communicational Perspectives

It is useful to start this discussion with some of the questions raised by Kramsch in her review of the state of foreign language education in the United States, France and Germany in the early 1990s. After reviewing the dominating educational ideologies for foreign language education and the various learning objectives set by different states in

the US, Kramsch felt that how foreign language education was perceived and conducted in the US failed to address some important issues that concern both general education and intercultural communication, and she asked:

> How can intercultural understanding arise from a skill-oriented, behaviourally conceived foreign language proficiency? Do global understanding, cross-cultural awareness automatically grow out of being able to master the present tense, order a meal in a restaurant or handle social situations (refers to: ACTFL Guidelines 1986 – American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages - not in the original)? How can critical thinking emerge from the unquestioned American view of the pursuit of happiness? How can world peace, effective participation in an interdependent global society result from the adversarial view of the world suggested by the President's Commission? Finally: How can international, intercultural goals be tested on an ACTFL proficiency scale that is typical of American educational culture?" (Kramsch, 1991:223)

Clearly these are important questions which Kramsch also asks with respect to France and Germany, and could be asked *mutatis mutandis* of other education systems. They pose a serious challenge to the general perception of foreign language education in the last few decades. They illustrate the point that what foreign language education is expected to achieve is by no means a simple and straightforward issue. As can be seen, the concept of foreign language learning being a means of facilitating the learner in developing the sociolinguistic competence to function effectively in the target culture environment is seriously questioned, and the aims and values of foreign language education are reviewed from a much wider scope.

Kramsch is not alone in challenging the conventional view, in Europe Byram and colleagues (e.g. Byram, 1997a; Byram and Risager, 1999; Byram and Zarate, 1997) have also criticised foreign language education for being confined predominately to the view of communicative language teaching, paying little attention to the important differences between intercultural communication and intracultural communication, therefore leaving the learner inadequately prepared for facing complex situations of intercultural interactions. But even more importantly, as they argue, with focus purely on sociolinguistics, it loses sight of some important issues that concern education, namely, personhood and social development. To put it differently, it fails to engage the learner in terms of self-reflection, critical thinking, and gaining deeper understanding of the other and otherness, which, they believe, should be a key, and an integral part of language education. They argue that foreign language education should aim not only to provide useful practical knowledge and skills for the sake of interacting with culturally

different others, but also to help the learner to develop the abilities to understand and to solve new problems critically and creatively.

Thus, they have established an explicit link between foreign language education and the general educational aim of promoting social development at both individual and societal level. On the basis that language learning is both cognitive and affective, and the process provides a potentially rich field for self-reflection and critical thinking, they argue that foreign language education should and could make important contributions to the realisation of the educational goals such as developing the civic duties and moral responsibilities of individuals, which involves a deeper understanding of social equality, social justice, human rights, etc. (Byram, 1997a; Byram and Morgan, 1994; Byram and Risager, 1999; Byram and Zarate, 1997; Starkey, 1995)

Education has been thought of as an important force in shaping society. One of its important responsibilities, it is believed, is to promote better self understanding both in terms of individual and society. (e.g. Habermas, 1971; Barnett, 1997) In his *Toward a Rational Society* Habermas (1971) emphasises the important role higher education should play in establishing or strengthening democracy through enabling and encouraging self-reflection and critical thinking, which, he argues strongly, are fundamental for the development of rational and responsible individuals and society. With the same conviction that reflexivity and critical thought are indispensable for the development of society and that higher education has the responsibility to supply such reflexive capacity, Barnett (1997) points out that knowledge is "socially sustained and invested with interests and backed by power" and thus "[W]e cannot leave our students sensing that there is a givenness to the knowledge structures that they are encountering or that those structures are socially neutral." (1997:5) Language as a social symbol and language learning as a means of accessing social resources and status, are intrinsically related to power relationships. For instance, from sociocultural and sociopolitical perspectives, viewing the differences between languages as manifestations of power relations, Nieto (2002) examines the relationship of language, literacy, and culture in the multicultural context of US education, and concludes that unless language and cultural diversity is valued and people are encouraged to engage with the diversity positively and constructively, the issue of inequality cannot be solved.

It can be seen from the following that the intercultural communicative approach differs significantly from the communicative approach in the way that it addresses

explicitly the differences between intercultural interlocutors in terms of identity and social values instead of ignoring them, thus transforming the differences into valuable resources for developing new perspectives and cultural awareness.

One of the main problems for which the conventional view of foreign language education is criticised is that the complexity of intercultural interaction is not taken into consideration, and that it shows little appreciation for the contextual differences between inter- and intra-cultural interactions and the dynamism of the interaction between context and relationship (Byram, 1997a; 1997b; Byram and Zarate, 1997; Byram and Risager, 1999). The earlier discussion shows that due to the processes of social categorisation and self-identification and due to differences in values and beliefs, the relationships that people of different cultures form in their social interactions bear significant differences from those between members of the same cultural group. That, subsequently, has significant impact on social interactions, but this is not taken into account in the communicative approach, and therefore the learning is based entirely on how natives interact with each other in their own social environment. Byram points out that there are significant differences between the two circumstances both from social psychological and linguistic perspectives, for instance, he states that "the subjective experience of interaction in a foreign language distinguishes significantly between inter-cultural/country and intra-cultural/country communication" (1997a:41). Therefore, it is wrong to assume that the learner would behave cognitively and affectively in the same way as the native speaker would when socialising in the target language, hence the need to develop a competence that is not identical to that of the native speaker. In fact, he argues, the competence the learner needs is quite different from that of the native speaker (1997a).

Because of such a difference he and his colleagues contend that it is not justifiable to set the native speaker as the model for the learner, and judge them against the native standards (Byram, 1997a; Byram and Zarate, 1997; Byram and Risager, 1999). Instead, they argue, the learning should be focused on developing a competence that enables the learner to handle the complex and unknown situations of intercultural interactions, that is, an ability "to mediate between cultures, to see differences, to perceive one in terms of the other and to establish communication which takes difference into consideration." (Byram and Risager, 1999:3-4) To emphasise the point that what comes out of the interactions between members of different cultures is not a reproduction of either the cultures involved, but something new as a result of negotiations between cultures for

shared meanings, and that the interlocutors are in a position that enables them to mediate between their own culture/s and other culture/s, Byram and Zarate have developed the concept of "intercultural speaker" to characterise this sort of 'in-between' position of intercultural communicators and propose that that should be the model for the foreign language learner (Byram and Risager, 1999). This implies important changes in terms of how foreign language teaching and learning is perceived and conducted.

According to Byram (1997a) the native speaker model is not appropriate for several reasons. Firstly, it is almost impossible for the learner, at least for the majority of learners, to develop fully the sociolinguistic competence enjoyed by the native speaker, due to differences in learning context and way of learning. It is quite obvious that most learners would never reach the native standards. Secondly, and much more importantly, this native model fails to recognise that the attempt to reach the native speaker's competence may not be desirable after all, as it may be gained at the expense of the learner's development of their own cultural competence, and what is more, it ignores the huge potential of the learner's own cultural knowledge and identity. For one thing, it tends to treat the learner as a passive recipient of knowledge instead of being an active 'agent' (Nieto, 2002) in constructing new knowledge, and therefore it takes no notice of what cultural experience the learner brings with them. Obviously, in attempting to produce the native-like speaker, the learner's own cultural knowledge is inevitably viewed as hindrance rather than useful resources for learning, because as far as the goals of the learning is concerned, there exists a tacit assumption – "the native is always right" - thus what is different is no good. (Byram, 1997a)

There is another aspect to this issue. The knowledge a person holds of his/her culture, both linguistic and non-linguistic, forms an important aspect of his/her cultural identity (1997a), thus to require the learner to identify fully with the native speaker model both linguistically and culturally may imply potential identity conflicts and difficulties, an issue that I will come back to later.

Furthermore, the native speaker model is thought as undesirable for another reason. That is, it does not include the situation where a language is used as lingua franca, an increasingly common phenomenon nowadays, thus, not being able to cater for the needs of those who have diverse cultural backgrounds. In such a case, the interlocutors each brings with them a different set of cultural knowledge and cultural

identity (Byram, 1997a), and may know very little about each other's cultures. Although they all have to try to follow the native norms, at least, linguistically, yet as has been shown already, meaning comes from the interplay of language and context, and since each of them would interpret context differently due to different cultural backgrounds, it is not hard to imagine that the native model won't work in such circumstances. The solution for this problem, it is suggested, can only be found in such an approach that emphasises coping with cultural diversity rather than focusing on uniformity. (Byram, 1997a)

To replace the native speaker model with the concept of intercultural speaker opens the space for the issues of cultural differences and cultural diversity to be addressed. By emphasising the mediating role of intercultural interlocutors, it shifts the focus of the learning from imitating the sociolinguistic behaviours of the native to how to use the language to solve problems that occur in intercultural interaction by focusing on some key issues in intercultural communication, such as, establishing and maintaining relationships with people of diverse cultures, coping with lack of information about others, etc. (Byram, 1997a) Obviously, this is a significant change. Its impact on the learning can be understood from the following ways.

Firstly, it implies important changes in learning content. With an emphasis on mediation and handling unfamiliar situations, much attention has to be placed on developing relevant skills as well as the willingness to explore the unknown, to re-examine what has been taken for granted, and to accept different points of view. For example, this requires an inclusion in the learning of an element of human relationships - the social conditions in which the relations are formed and the impact of such relationships on social behaviours. It means social issues such as group differences, social status, power relationships, etc., are necessary information for the learner, because social interactions are deeply affected by these social factors. With the communicative language learning approach not only is the intercultural dimension left aside, the whole issue of social difference is often downplayed. One of the problems for which some conventional practices are criticised is that they tend to present a simplistic view of the language community in question. They tend to present the community, often a nation state, in an idealised manner, as if it were homogeneous and there were little difference in social perception and behaviour within the community, avoiding the uneasy issues like race, ethnicity, class, etc. (Byram, 1997a) Whatever the reason, whether for the sake of focusing attention on the linguistic task, for avoiding to get too

complicated, or simply for convenience, this, even in terms of communicative competence, does not serve the learner to their best interest, as they are inevitably "socially crippled", not being equipped to adapt to differences in social encounters.

But adaptability is what is accentuated in the intercultural communicative approach, where the learner is expected to gain the competence to socialise with people of various social and cultural backgrounds, to cope with situations that could differ markedly from one to another. From the perspective of intercultural communication, earlier discussion demonstrates quite clearly that it is essential for individuals to be aware of how communication is affected by cultural differences between interlocutors, and subsequently to be able to act mindfully. Mindful action is clearly a manifestation of willingness to be socially engaged and to negotiate one's position in the interaction, and it thus entails empathy, and a readiness to be flexible. This is a position where the learner is willing to take into consideration of both their own cultural perspective and that of the other, and thus is able to base their judgement from a wider or new perspective. Such an attitude is based on the awareness that others must have their reasons to take up different views and actions, and that consensus can only be reached through mediation and mutual understanding. To raise such an awareness, the learning has to provide the learner with the opportunity to see different views, different practices, and to be reflective of their own cultural practice.

Another aspect that needs to be addressed concerns the issues of relationship and identity. This contains two aspects: one regarding understanding of the communication process in general, and the other concerning the learner in particular. In regard to the first, since each interlocutor brings into the context of their interaction with others their own cultural identities, language being an explicit and important marker of identity, to assume that the context of intercultural communication is monocultural means little recognition of the difference in identity needs and its impact on interpersonal interaction. To start with, how one identifies themselves with others and whether their desired identity is recognised by others has profound influence on relationship and behaviour. For example, what linguistic form, or dialect, or language one chooses to use in a given context often reflects one's understanding of the context and hence the intention of how to present the self or relate to others.

In regard to relationship, one of the factors impacting on self-identification and other-attribution is the perceived power relationship between interlocutors (Bourdieu,

1991). In terms of language learning, the perceived power relationship between the target language/culture and that of the learner could have significant impact on motivation and consequently outcomes of learning, as individuals may face conflicts in terms of self-identity and self-identification, as can be seen clearly from Nieto's work on multicultural education in the US, where she argues that for many young immigrants in the US to enter American mainstream culture often means "abandoning their families and forgetting their past" (2002:103). In regard to the foreign language learner, emphasising a monolingual and monocultural context of learning would mean little room for their identities and concerns to be presented and negotiated, and they have to accept what is predetermined for them. Potentially, this could lead to conflicts or difficulties, because, as shown earlier, the subjective experience of interacting in a foreign language is different from that in one's mother tongue, and it entails different relationships and differences in self-identification.

The second point in regard to the impact of the change concerns what is to be expected out of foreign language learning. To replace the native speaker model with the model of intercultural speaker implies that developing linguistic and sociolinguistic competences are no longer the only goals of foreign language teaching and learning. But this does not mean that their importance is downplayed. Rather, what is emphasised, from the perspective of communication, is to apply these skills effectively in order to meet the demands of varied situations. Thus, in his ICC model Byram includes the components of both intercultural competence and of linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competences. The important difference of the intercultural approach from the communicative approach is that it takes intercultural psychology and sociology as a foundational aspect, and builds its theory and pedagogy on the understanding of how perception and behaviour are affected by social and psychological factors such as social grouping, social stratification, self-identity and self-identification, etc. Thus in language learning much emphasis has to be placed on raising cultural awareness and developing skills in order to cope with unfamiliar and challenging situations. In terms of competence development, what distinguishes the intercultural perspective significantly from the communicative perspective is that the former emphasises attitudinal change, such as the "readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own" (Byram, 1997a:57) and the willingness to accept difference, and developing knowledge and skills to mediate between different cultures.

The above discussion shows that the intercultural approach is grounded solidly on its connection to general educational goals. So the outcomes of learning have to be judged also from the perspective of general education. Earlier discussion shows that a strong link can be drawn between language education and personhood development and social development, and this can be understood broadly from two interrelated aspects. On the one hand, it is expected that the learning will lead to a better understanding of the world reality and broader world views. It is believed that through introducing different world realities and different perspectives, the learning would enable the learner to see things from different angles and also be able to reflect upon their own world views. In this way they can be expected to move away from an ethnocentric perspective.

On the other hand, to expose the learner to different cultures will inevitably bring to their attention differences, sometimes even conflicts between different cultures in terms of values, beliefs, and practices. Although it is important to show respect to different views and practices, yet this doesn't mean that differences have to be accepted without being questioned. At the same time, it is equally important that one has to question one's own cultural norms and values from a different perspective. From the educational point of view, as has been seen earlier, to develop the disposition of being critical and to refuse to accept any values blindly is vital both for the development of individuals and society and for the advance of knowledge. From the perspective of individuals engaging in intercultural communications, being able to critique could mean that they can act against what they believe to be morally wrong, and may take active actions to resolve difficult issues more creatively. The importance of addressing the issue of value in education is raised by Fleming (2006). He contends that it is important to address differences within and between nations, and to promote "a high degree of meta-awareness of identity and of the fact that value sometimes conflict." (2006:141) With the view that language education should play an important role in promoting moral responsibilities and civic duties, Byram (1997a) places much emphasis on developing critical cultural awareness, with the explicit aim of encouraging better understanding of important social issues such as human rights, social justice, etc., and reflexivity of one's own moral stance. Based on the view that language issues concern deeply ethnic identities, social harmony, and human rights, and these are the core of democratic citizenship, Starkey (2002) argues strongly that language education is in the right position for democratic citizenship development and thus should take an active role in promoting critical cultural awareness.

In this section I have examined from both the perspective of communication and the perspective of education the grounds for the intercultural approach in foreign language teaching and learning. As the ultimate aim of this research explained in Chapter 1 is to develop a more refined understanding of learning needs and language teaching practice, through the analysis of intercultural learning in one specific case – a business Chinese course and its antecedents in study abroad – the above discussion provides the necessary framework and perspective in appraising the data collected for the case. In terms of evaluation of competence, the language and culture education approach offers a perspective of personal growth which is not obvious in communicative approaches.

As a conclusion of this chapter, I will summarise the main issues discussed above:

- Successful intercultural communication requires the competence to address the issues of intercultural anxiety, interpersonal and intergroup relationships as well as the understanding of the cultural system/s concerned, including linguistic system.
- The conceptualisation of intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence, and the three criteria for assessing the competence – emotion/attitudes, knowledge, and behaviour.
- To promote intercultural competence development through language education is a response to the changing world and to serve the needs of individuals and the society as a whole.
- The complex relationship between language and culture and its implication to language teaching and learning.

Chapter Four

Assessing Intercultural Competence and the Operation of the Assessment

Assessment of intercultural competence is, as stated in Chapter 1, the foundation in the thesis for discussing the wider questions of the purposes of language teaching. In the previous chapter, I have shown that being interculturally competent embraces a wide range of issues and is thus a rather elusive and complex concept, and that so far there is little consensus about how exactly to define the term intercultural competence. This complex nature makes it very challenging to assess such a competence. As I mentioned in the introduction, a lot of efforts have been made in exploring and developing methods and instruments for assessment, and innovative means of evaluation have been proposed and tested. In this chapter, I will first discuss briefly some important issues concerning assessing IC, and then introduce the models and their combination that I am going to use and the specific context and requirements of the assessment.

4.1. Some General Issues Concerning IC Assessment

One of the major concerns with regard to IC assessment is whether or not an individual's competence in handling intercultural communication can be measured effectively and objectively (e.g. Byram, 1997a; Kramsch, 1993; Spitzberg and Cupach, 1984). To start with, due to the interpersonal nature and context-dependency of communication, to make sound judgement of any interaction one has to take into account the impact of relationships on interactants and the formation of an interactive context. But relationship is a variable, which, as pointed out by Spitzberg and Cupach (1984), can only be best understood by interactants themselves, not a third-party observer. This is because "[A]n interactant is the only person who knows whether his or her conversational objectives were achieved, and the conversational partner is in the best position to know whether such goals were obtained via appropriate interaction." (1984:94) From this perspective, it is not possible to have full understanding of any communicative event without the insider's knowledge, let alone to have objective and accurate judgement of the competence of the individuals involved in the interactions. This makes assessment very complicated, and has serious implications for the conceptualisation and methodology of IC assessment.

The difficulty is further evident when one considers that much of what is defined as intercultural competence is not readily observable. As attitudes and worldviews are

manifested only through behaviours, information is only accessible through observing behaviours or self reports from interactants themselves. While an outsider's observation lacks the insider's views in regard to relationships as well as intentions, self report can hardly avoid being subjective and partial, as it most likely reflects only the reporter's perspective. Clearly, failing to include all the different aspects will lead to biased interpretations.

The concept of being objective in assessment carries the implication that what is being assessed needs to be clearly definable and if possible quantifiable so that standard criteria can be applied, and judgements can be made in an explicit and transparent manner. As shown above, behaviour, which is visible and hence relatively comparable, does not provide some important information regarding the perceived relationships and identities; therefore it is not possible to make accurate judgement of competence on observed behaviour alone. This is related to the next issue, that is, how IC competence can be assessed in a holistic manner given that it is made up of three different components, and that attitudes/motivation and knowledge are accessible only through observation of behaviour. Also, there is the issue of 'quantity' to be taken into consideration. That is, is it possible to judge objectively IC competence on the basis of one or two episodes of social interactions?

Furthermore, there also seem to be doubts about whether an assessment can accurately reflect the development of an individual in terms of going through an intercultural transformation. Viewing the process of developing intercultural perspective as a journey towards what she terms the "third place", "that grows in the interstices between the cultures the learner grew up with and the new cultures he or she is being introduced to" (Kramsch, 1993:236), and which is a "very personal place" (1993:257), Kramsch makes the point that how the new perspective manifests itself differs from person to person, and can be in very different forms. She maintains: "for each learner it will be differently located, and will make different sense at different times" (ibid.). From this point of view, it is an almost impossible task to have any objective and effective measurement of the state of intercultural transformation.

All this means it is essential to have a clear understanding of what exactly one is assessing and to produce the result that is clearly understandable in relation to others while not discounting contextual differences between individuals. From research literature it can be seen that much effort has been made in establishing theoretical

frameworks and in documenting empirical evidence from various perspectives (e.g. Byram, 1997a; Jacobson *et al.*, 1999; Spitzberg and Cupach, 1984). But before moving into that area, it is necessary to take into the discussion some of the views on the above mentioned issues.

First, it is important to understand what the implications are of the variables of relationship and context of communication for the issue of assessment. As said above, an insider's knowledge is crucial for full understanding of an interactive event and how the interactants manage their interactions. Nevertheless, in terms of competence assessment it is suggested that distinctions need to be made between an event-focused approach and a tendency-focused approach (Spitzberg and Cupach, 1984). With a tendency-focused approach, competence is viewed as communicative predispositions, which tend to show a consistency in behaviour across contexts – communicating "with different people, in different environments, with diverse goals and topics" (1984:92); while conversely, an event-focused approach would treat competence to be context-specific, and thus evaluate behaviours only in the context of given situations. The distinction thus means assessment can either be in a cross-situational manner, or alternatively in a situation-dependent manner, depending on whether the interest is tilted to how an individual copes with a specific situation or his/her general adaptability to intercultural interactions. However, Spitzberg and Cupach make the point that the two approaches should not be viewed as mutually exclusive.

Whether emphasis is on tendency or state (event-focused), the same problem is encountered in conducting assessment: the accessibility of the underlying aspect of the competence and whether the three components of competence – affect, cognition and behaviour – can be evaluated in a holistic manner. This issue will be addressed from two perspectives. First of all, there will be a review on some studies on information processing, revealing the 'invisible' aspects of competence, to give better ideas of what happens between cognition and behaviour. Then, attention will be placed on the issue of assessment more specifically from the perspective of education and development.

To help with understanding of the issue of evaluating the underlying aspects of intercultural competence, it is useful to recall the discussion on social cognition discussed in chapter 2. The self-other distinction and the need for individuals to strive for positive image of self are among the key concepts of the social cognition approach. Based on these concepts, it is believed that the process of communication is

fundamentally influenced by self-perception, which is how individuals view themselves in relation to others or to the social context that they are in (e.g. Tajfel, 1978; Turner, 1982). An important implication of this approach to the present issue is that it makes explicit the link between psychological motivation, behaviour and cognition. This provides a key for understanding the issues such as how individuals adjust themselves to fit into their social environment, and how intercultural adaptation occurs.

Put in broad terms, the social cognitive perspective reveals how individuals perceive their interaction with others, especially in terms of fulfilling some personal objectives, such as self-identities, social inclusion, etc., has significant impact on their psychological state, and consequently their behaviour in interactions. It means the more able one feels in managing interactions with others and achieving personal goals, the less psychological stress he or she is likely to experience. On the other hand, content and confidence comes from successful experience of social encounter, and thus it is directly related to the knowledge and skills one has in keeping situations under control. As our earlier discussion on culture shock shows, the process of overcoming culture shock can be viewed as a learning process, a process of growth (Adler, 1975), through which one's cognitive structure becomes increasingly complex, and subsequently the person becomes well adjusted to the new cultural environment both socioculturally and psychologically over time (Kim, 2001). A number of theories on intercultural competence development have been established on the basis of these theoretical understanding, some focusing on stress management and social adjustment/adaptation such as anxiety/uncertainty management theory (Gudykunst, 1995); stress-adaptation-growth theory (Kim, 2001); and some on social cognition development or development of intercultural sensitivity (e.g. Bennett, 1993), the stress-adaptation-growth theory; face negotiation theory (Ting-Toomey, 1988).

The virtue of this social cognition approach lies not only in the fact that it brings to our attention the perceptual aspect of social interaction instead of focusing only on behaviour per se, but more importantly that as a consequence of this, it allows clear insights into the interactive relations between the different aspects of IC competence. This makes it possible for indications to be identified and understood in terms of intercultural competence development, because behaviour is seen as the outcome of a complicated cognitive process involving emotions and various kinds of knowledge, instead of as an action that is independent of other factors.

However, it is recognised that although exhibited behaviour is the outcome of information processing, indicating how an individual perceives and assesses the whole interactive situation, yet making judgements of competence on the basis of individual performance alone is not adequate, because unless a behavioural response can be reproduced in similar contexts, it does not necessarily mean that the person who makes it has real understanding of the sociocultural significance and implications of that action (Spitzberg and Cupach, 1984). In terms of competence evaluation, this implies that evidence of consistency is a necessary requisite for recognising and sanctioning the competence. Knowing how behaviour is guided by perceptual understanding, it is not difficult to see that such evidence not only can be found through direct observation of behaviour over time, but can also be detected through analysing what is behind one's behavioural response, i.e., finding the links between emotion, cognition, and behaviour. That is to say, in order to make accurate assessment, making sure that behaviours are competent performance with clear objectives, it is necessary to understand the directive force behind the demonstrated behaviours (ibid.) in addition to observation of the behaviours this can be elicited from actors' reports.

With a more pragmatic perspective, Byram (1997a) addressed the issue of operationalisation of IC competence assessment. He makes the point that in assessing IC competence it is necessary to take both the observable and unobservable factors into account so as to have a holistic view of what one does, and how and why he or she does it that way. In his view, to have reliable and accurate evaluation, it is important to have adequate evidence that what is under evaluation is not just isolated actions or events, but well-thought-out responses or solutions to problems or situations encountered in intercultural interactions, based on sound understanding of intercultural communication process and the culture/s concerned. Otherwise, there is the risk that the assessment may be reduced to a kind of checklist of some factual information and/or behavioural norms, thus missing vital insight or clues to whether or not the person being assessed can and/or will be willing to make adjustments in accordance with intercultural situational demands.

Byram (ibid.) then suggests that for the purpose of using assessment for 'gate-keeping' – certification award by educational institutions – a combination of different techniques could be used to collect evidence of achievement both in terms of acquisition of factual knowledge and change in perspective. He applies the concept of 'deep learning' and 'shallow learning' to distinguish different levels of development, the

difference between what can be described as qualitative learning – change in perspective, and what is known as simply 'regurgitating' factual knowledge without real understanding of its significance. 'Deep learning' is explained here as "underlying understanding, metacognition, and the ability to reflect on one's own thinking and response to experience" (ibid.:90). Information of this sort, however, can only be accessed indirectly through interpretation, simply because cognitive process can only be inferred, not observed directly. To gain good ideas about deep learning, it is suggested that methods other than psychometric tests are more appropriate for this purpose, such as essay writing, personal portfolio of intercultural experiences, etc. (Byram, ibid.; Byram and Morgan, 1994). Information gathered through these means may shed light on how individuals perceive the situations they are in, the roles they and others take, and the relations between them, and subsequently the strategies and actions they take with intention to achieve, or help others to achieve, their objectives of the interactions.

But to resort to interpretation would raise the question of objectivity. It is possible that people with different experiences and different perspectives would interpret a same event or action differently, so in this sense, it is difficult to achieve objectivity when interpretation is employed as the means of assessment. Nevertheless, every social phenomenon is subject to interpretation, and the question really is whether the interpretation is built on a well grounded framework, which provides a perspective that is sound and clear. That is to say, to apply the concept of objectivity to IC competence assessment it is necessary to establish a conceptual structure that defines clearly the objectives as well as the conditions essential for understanding and interpretation.

Thus, various aspects of intercultural learning need to be considered in applying the concept of objectivity. First, development of intercultural competence is seen as a change in perspective, "a leap in insight" (Byram, 1997a:105), it is thus a change in quality rather than in quantity, such as from 'ethnocentricity' to 'ethnorelativity'. For instance, some important objectives of general education are to promote independent thinking and problem solving skills, to encourage developing criticality and creativity through learning experience. Such qualities are not easy to measure in terms of quantity and explicitness. So to be able to make any judgement on development, means something other than quantifiable measurements has to be applied. Based on the view that it is complex and difficult to quantify evidence of development of this sort, Byram and colleagues (Byram, 1997a; Byram and Morgan, 1994) suggest that the approach used for assessing empathy in the teaching of history can be applied for assessing IC or

ICC competence development. This means instead of getting evidence of increase in quantity of knowledge, assessment of 'deep learning' can be made against explicit descriptions of what is satisfactory performance. Thus to achieve 'objectivity' in assessment it is essential that descriptors are clearly defined, so that the same standard can be applied in a transversal manner.

The above discussion is also relevant to another point made earlier concerning the third space. Since the native model is replaced by the model of the intercultural speaker, what is expected from the learner is not a precise copy of the culture the learner tries to learn, but a mixture of, or rather a new product out of, both the learner's original culture and the new culture/s being introduced through the learning. Due to interactions between different cultures, which is inevitable in intercultural contact, the learning experience is thought to be a transformative process, and what comes out of it is a new perspective (e.g. Kramsch, 1993), an 'intercultural transformation', as put by Kramsch. Although it is probably out of the question to translate this transformation into any quantitative measurement or to have precise descriptions of what exactly the new perspective should be like, nevertheless, it seems possible to look for indications of change in perspective, finding out tendencies of handling different intercultural situations. Clearly, as the 'third place' is characterised as idiosyncratic (Kramsch, 1993), it is essential that the assessment has to be based on adequate evidence of both clear change in perceptual structures and in behavioural responses, and that the demonstrated perspective is based on clear understanding of the given cultural situations.

On the other hand, in order to get adequate evidence for more comprehensive and accurate judgement of levels of attainment, it is necessary to take all the different aspects of competence into account. For instance, one may be highly motivated to engage with culturally different others, but lacks the capability to do so, and on the other hand, one may have the knowledge and skills to communicate, but is not interested in getting contact with others. Similarly, one may have what is called 'culture-general' knowledge and skills, such as empathy, openness, flexibility, etc, but is short of 'culture-specific' knowledge – for instance, the behavioural norms and the communication system, language in particular, of a given social group. Conversely, it is also possible that one may have considerable knowledge about a culture and the willingness to engage, but is not aware how different intercultural communication is from intracultural communication. In order to be able to identify potential dysfunctions or weak links, so to speak, separate evaluations of development in different aspects of

the competence are also needed. Byram (1997a) proposes a set of detailed descriptions of the different components of intercultural communicative competence, which he terms *savoirs*, the criteria for assessing five separate components of the competence. I shall come to the five *savoirs* later with details. But the discussion we have had so far shows that sound assessment on IC can be achieved if measures are taken to ensure clarity in criteria and consistency in evidence.

4.2. The Models to Be Applied for the Assessment

Two models will be applied and used in an unconventional combination to maximize the results of the assessment of the development of IC competence in the following data analysis. One is Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (1993), and the other is Byram's Comprehensive Model for Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) (1997a). The purpose of applying two models is to look at the data from a wider perspective, as the models have different theoretical orientations, different approaches, and different foci, and hence provides different perspectives. I am attracted to the idea of using the two models simultaneously because while Byram's model provides a tool to examine different aspects of competence in detail, Bennett's model offers a developmental perspective, and so it will be interesting to learn whether the two modes are complementary to each other, and I hope, to combine the two approaches will enable better insights into the data. Now I will introduce the two models in details below.

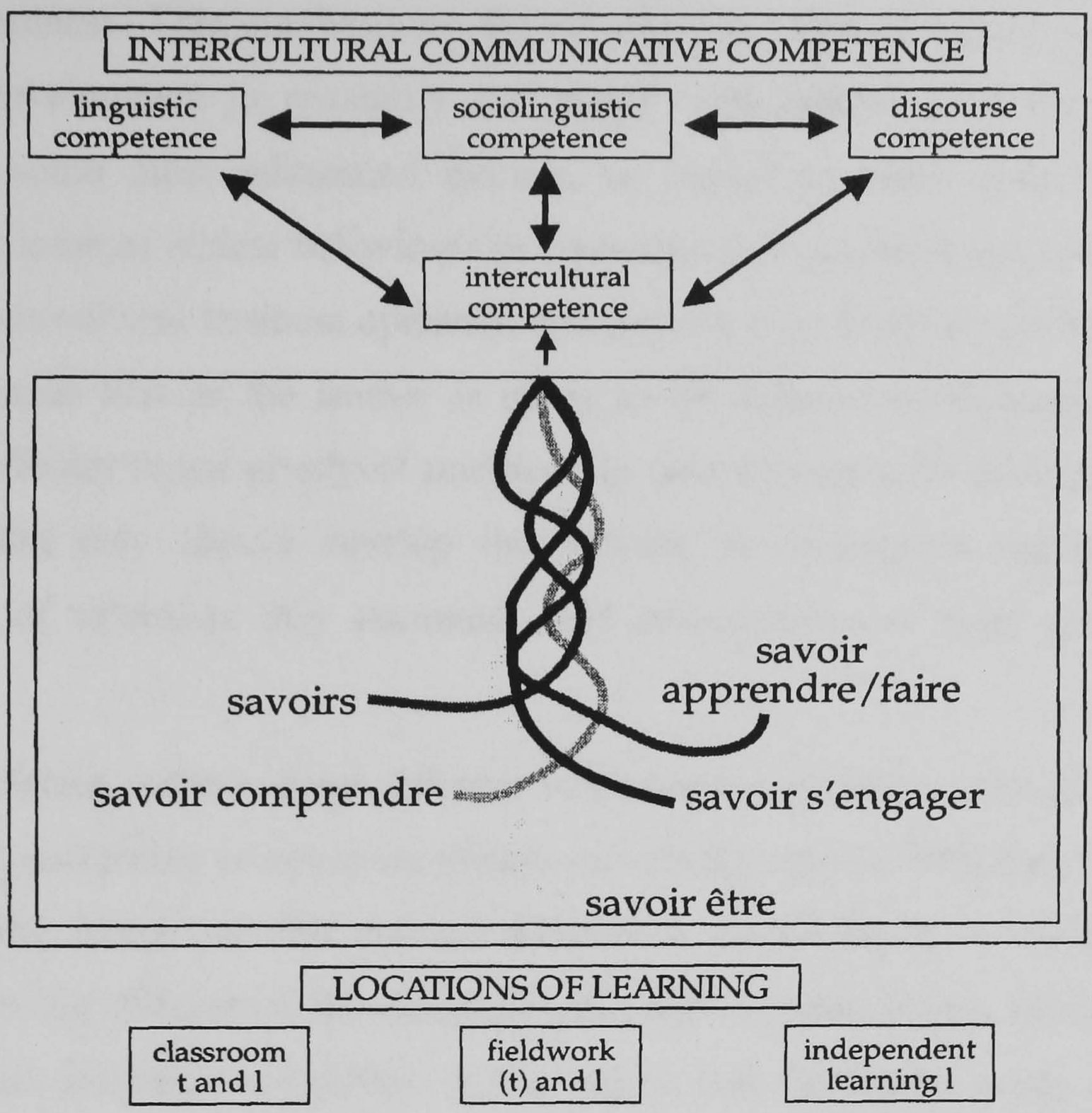
The model developed by Byram is described as a prescriptive model at threshold level. (Byram, 1997a) It offers an approach to teaching, which was stressed in the discussion of it in the preceding chapter, and to assessment, as will be the focus in this chapter. It provides a framework that enables an assessor to look into an individual's IC competence from different perspectives, by separating the competence into five components with clear objectives. Yet, at the same time it also allows a full picture of how the different aspects are related to one another. Because discernible links can be found and followed between different components, it is thus possible to keep in view the interrelated relations between them.

With attention on education, especially language education, Byram's approach reflects a strong interest in educational objectives and pedagogy, and this is manifested in the model, as it will show in the later discussion. He notes that,

> There are three fundamental features of the model of ICC:

- it proposes an attainable ideal, the intercultural speaker, and rejects the notion of the native speaker as a model for foreign language learners;
- it is a model for the acquisition of ICC in an educational context, and includes educational objectives;
- because it has an educational dimension, it includes specifications of locations of learning and of the roles of the teacher and learner. (Byram, 1997a:70)

Set in a context of language education, the model lays out teaching/learning and assessment objectives for each of the five components of ICC, which are termed *savoir être* (attitudes), *savoirs* (knowledge), *savoir comprendre* (skills of interpreting and relating), *savoir apprendre/faire* (skills of discovering and interaction), and *savoir s'engager* (critical cultural awareness), but nevertheless, links can be clearly identified between these different components from the descriptions of the objectives. For example, in the component of *savoir être*, one of the objectives is described as: "interest in discovering other perspectives on interpretation of familiar and unfamiliar phenomena both in one's own and in other cultures and cultural practices" (ibid.:58). In relation to this attitudinal trait, one can find corresponding objectives in other components, such as the skill to "elicit from an interlocutor the concepts and values of documents or events and develop an explanatory system susceptible of application to other phenomena" (ibid.:61-2) in *savoir apprendre/faire,* and knowledge such as "the national memory of one's own country and how its events are related to and seen from the perspective of other countries", and "the national memory of one's interlocutor's country and the perspective on them from one's own country" (ibid.:59) in the component of *savoirs*, and so on. In terms of competence assessment, this means it is possible to identify the presence and absence of each aspect of the competence in an individual's development, and on the basis of that to form a more complete view of the overall attainment of the individual. Below it is the graphic presentation of the ICC model and the definitions of the five dimensions of ICC, but the detailed objectives will be presented later with data analysis.



(Byram, 1997:73)

Attitudes (*savoir être*): Curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own.

Knowledge (*savoirs*): of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction.

Skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*): Ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own.

Skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*): Ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.

Critical cultural awareness/political education (*savoir s'engager*): An ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries. (ibid.:50-3)

Different from other models, apart from the dimensions of attitudes, knowledge and skills, this model also includes explicitly another aspect – critical cultural awareness or political education. With the view that foreign language learning is a process that not only enables the learner to acquire different linguistic codes or different ways of information transmission, but also introduces them to different worldviews and different ways of social interactions, and thus should be an important part of personal growth, Byram argues for the inclusion in foreign language education explicitly the aspect of evaluative orientation and self-reflection, so as to promote the development of critical

cultural awareness. This emphasis on the educational value of intercultural learning, especially development in criticality and moral responsibility of individuals is less obvious in some other adaptation models, or indeed in other research literature, although the issue of ethical behaviours in intercultural interactions has been constantly raised in cross-cultural business operation and training (e.g. Evanoff, 2004; Lee, 1996). Byram contends that as the learner is likely to be exposed to different, sometimes markedly different moral or ethical traditions in their contact with other culture/s, it is important that they should develop the abilities to understand and make sound judgements of situations they encounter, and subsequently to make well informed decisions.

As different cultures have different values and rationality, what is regarded as good or bad, acceptable or not is not always universally agreed. Although it is essential to intercultural interaction that cultural differences should be treated with respect, it doesn't mean that differences should be accepted without questioning. This doesn't only apply to target language and culture. It also means that the learner needs to reflect on their own culture values and practices. On the one hand, without real understanding of why different values and practices exist between cultures people would be more likely to either act ethnocentrically or to fall into "the trap of cultural relativism" (Byram, ibid.:46). So it is important that intercultural learning should promote deep understanding of the impact of cultural influence on social practice and behaviour on the one hand, and awareness that differences between cultures should be viewed not from any particular cultural perspective, but from a fundamental understanding of human conditions. On the other hand, it is an important goal of general education to promote critical awareness, the ability of an individual to question the status quo and to think and act critically and independently. To develop such a personal quality, Byram emphasises, is important in terms of personal and social development as well as in terms of successful intercultural communication.

The importance of developing critical cultural awareness and the competence to deal with cross-cultural ethical issues is shared by some other researchers such as Paige and Martin (1983) and Evanoff (2004). According to Evanoff, three different approaches can be found in dealing with cross-cultural ethics, namely, universalist, relativist, and constructivist. He argues that the first two approaches fail to provide satisfactory solutions to intercultural ethical issues. The universalist approach attempts to find a "meta-ethic" (2004:440) to solve the problem, but finds it almost impossible to

get such a set of universally agreed values or ethical standards. The problem with the relativist on the other hand, as the argument goes, is that "the relativist would ask us to simply adopt a tolerant attitude toward whatever differences exist between different cultures without further debate" (2004:445). In contrast to these, the constructivist contends that as there are no rules that are available for solving cross-cultural ethical issues, it is necessary for interactants themselves to find their own solutions "through a dialogical process in which the participants attempt to critique existing norms and arrive at a more adequate set of norms which are capable of resolving the specific problems they face." (2004:439)

It is obvious that the capacity for creating new thinking and finding creative solutions acceptable to different cultural groups would entail a sound understanding of the different perspectives applied in a particular situation and an ability to evaluate that situation fairly and independently. To critique existing norms requires an understanding of the virtues and limits of the norms, but to reach mutually agreed solutions between those with diverse views, it is necessary for them to find a common ground. Although neither universalism nor relativism provides an answer in itself, nonetheless, the basic principles behind each of them, namely, establishing common grounds between those in conflict and to respect differences, are the necessary underlying principles for any solutions to intercultural ethical problems. It is contended that a common ground for solving intercultural ethical issues has to be built on the basis of our shared sense of humanity and respect for human rights (Byram, 1997a; Paige and Martin, 1983). In terms of competence assessment, progress in this respect implies not only a willingness to question a status quo and an effort to understand the differences between perspectives, but also a profound sense of humanity (Byram, 1997a).

Development of this sort is not only a clear indication of moving away from ethnocentrism, but also shows the ability to integrate different views and different values into a coherent and consistent cognitive structure – an increase in sophistication of worldview. This point will be discussed again later when I introduce the model presented by Bennett. So far, the discussion has shown that either from the perspective of personal growth – more educational oriented – or from the perspective of problem solving – more interaction or communication oriented – critical cultural awareness is an essential aspect of intercultural competence.

As said before, the ICC model is built on the concept of the intercultural speaker, and hence the criteria for competence are based on what is perceived as an ideal intercultural speaker – the one who is able to successfully mediate across cultures instead of a native speaker. According to Byram (1997a), what is perceived as 'adequacy' for such a role is the capacity to fulfil the function of mediating between people of different cultural backgrounds, and although there is a lot of room for the learner to improve after reaching the point of 'adequacy', which is presented with the concept of threshold level, yet as far as standards of performance are concerned, it suffices once the learner reaches this point. In this sense, he explains, the implication of the threshold concept 'implies a minimal element of progression" (1997a:76), and therefore it does not contain levels below or beyond the threshold. However, he suggests that the concept of threshold being applied here should not be perceived as something of a fixed nature, instead it should be defined in accordance with the particular circumstances of every context, therefore "[T]he notion of stages on the way to a desirable goal is replaced by the notion that the goal may be more complex in some circumstances than others and therefore the demands on learners greater and more complex" (1997:78). Pedagogically, this model provides a framework or guidance for curriculum design and assessment, and what is perceived to be adequate in terms of development is context-bound, thus differing from case to case. The model provides explicit descriptions of what is required of the learner as an ideal mediator in intercultural communication.

In contrast to the ICC model, Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity focuses on progression in intercultural cognition. It addresses the issue of intercultural competence development from the perspective of increase in intercultural sensitivity, which is defined as the ability to make differentiations of different worldviews. The basis of this developmental model is the assumption that the process of development in intercultural competence is the process in which the learner gains "increasing sophistication in dealing with cultural difference, moving from ethnocentrism through stages of greater recognition and acceptance of difference, here termed 'ethnorelativism.'" (1993:22) Thus, the greater the sensitivity to different worldviews, the more advanced the level of handling intercultural communication. An important difference between the ICC model and DMIS model is that the former draws a line between being competent and less competent by setting the benchmark for an effective intercultural speaker, while the latter offers a view of how individuals move

from stage to stage in their development in identifying cultural differences and handling ethnocentrism.

But comparatively speaking, DMIS is more difficult to operate, because the model is built on predominantly cognitive development, and the relationship between the three components, attitudes, knowledge, and behaviour is not addressed directly. The criteria of differentiating stages of progress are established on the basis of different attitudinal responses to cultural difference. The argument is, very briefly, that behaviour is based on people's worldviews: the way the world reality is perceived, which is the outcome of the process of socialisation. So if people's worldview is expanded to include different cultural perspectives, it implies at least some familiarity with the culture/s involved on the one hand, and potential engagement in interactions with it on the other hand. Thus people's orientations to cultural differences would be a good indicator of their IC competence development. To put this theoretical model into operation, Hammer *et al.* (2003) have created what is called the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), and according to them, the model is largely supported by the evidence they collected in the process of creating IDI. So far I am not aware of any attempt to use DMIS as an independent tool for data analysis, nor in combination with other model/s, but I hope by combining this theoretic framework for IC competence development with the more comprehensive ICC model, I will be able gain better understanding of the data I collected and show the advantages of the combined model.

Bennett posits that the more able one is in discriminating cultural differences, the more sophisticated is their worldview, and hence the more potential they would have in exercising intercultural competence (Hammer *et al.* 2003). Based on this concept he is interested in how intercultural differences are construed differently as people move from a less experienced stage to a more experienced stage in their interactions with culturally different others. He uses the term 'intercultural sensitivity' to "refer to the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences" (2003:422) and treats this ability as fundamental to developing new perspectives, as he puts it: "that the reality which we experience is constructed according to variable cultural patterns and that these differences are the crucial factors in our attempts to understand and communicate experience cross-culturally" (Bennett, 1993:24). So, the basic assumption of this model is that cultural differences are experienced differently in accordance with the complexity of one's underlying worldview, and "the observable behaviour and self-

reported attitudes at each stage are indicative of the state of the underlying worldview" (Hammer *et al.*, 2003:423).

The model created by Bennett (1993) comprises six different stages of progression, with three of them being categorised as ethnocentric orientations, and the other three as ethnorelative orientations, as presented below:

Denial →Defence → Minimization → Acceptance → Adaptation → Integration

ETHNOCENTRISM ETHNORELATIVISM

(Hammer *et al.*, 2003)

The progression is expected to be in one direction, from ethnocentric stages to ethnorelative stages. The three ethnocentric orientations are identified as 'denial', 'defence', and 'minimisation', where one's own culture is experienced either as the only valid explanation of the world reality or the universal truth. While the ethnorelative orientations identified are 'acceptance', 'adaptation', and 'integration', where in contrast, one's own culture is recognised as one of the many equally valid frames of reference to the world reality. However, in their effort to construct the IDI on the basis of DMIS, Hammer *et al.* (2003) found that the result emerged from their research implies some differences to the theoretical model.

The first stage of the DMIS is *denial*, which refers to the cognitive state where cultural differences are not recognised or simply denied. According to Bennett (1993), with this worldview people show neither interest in nor understanding of different culture/s, and in a worse form, people would treat others as less human than themselves, thus avoiding having contact with them. This is thought to be typical of monocultural mentality (Hammer *et al.*, 2003). At the next stage, *defence*, people are able to make some discrimination of overt cultural differences, though only to the extent of superficial understanding, based predominantly on stereotyping. With this worldview, difference is perceived as a potential threat to "one's sense of reality and thus to one's identity" (Bennett, 1993:35). So unambiguous distinctions are made between 'us' and 'them', and others are negatively perceived. It is suggested that *defence* can manifest itself in different forms in accordance with one's perception of his or her social relations with others. For people of a dominant culture this orientation could result in denigration of the other's values; but for people of non-dominant cultures it could be revealed in the form of solidifying their separate cultural identity. Yet in some cases where people perceive their adopted culture to be better than or superior to their original culture, it is

suggested, *reversal* – a variation of *defence* – may occur, where one's own culture is denigrated.

The theory posits that the two constructs represent different cultural orientations in sequence, indicating a development in sensitivity. Thus, the move from *denial* to *defence* should be viewed as a progress in cognitive development. However, in accordance with the outcomes of the factor analysis carried out in the process of IDI development, there was no sufficient empirical data to support the actual existence of these two separate orientations. As reported by Hammer *et al.* (2003), what emerged from the data indicates that *denial* and *defence* may in fact be just one single factor, which they termed *D/D* in their IDI, rather than two separate constructs suggested by the DMIS theory. Moreover, the data also suggests that *reversal* should be viewed as an independent factor deserving to be treated separately rather than as a variation of *defence*. But *reversal* is not relevant in most cases of intercultural interaction, therefore does not bear direct consequences for the sequence of the process.

Further down the line of the development is *minimisation*, the last ethnocentric stage of the three. It is believed that people with this orientation are still ethnocentric oriented, but to them cultural difference is relatively unimportant, and they tend to make an effort "to bury difference under the weight of cultural similarities." (Bennett, 1993:41)

At this stage cultural difference is overtly recognised as in *defence*, but not seen in the negative light, and even perceived to be interesting sometimes (ibid.). This is because, as suggested by Hammer *et al.*, (2003) deep cultural differences are obscured by universalism, where a single truth is sought after, and other cultures are either trivialised or romanticised. Although emphasis is place on similarities in the state of minimisation, nevertheless, in terms of value orientation, judgements on cultural differences are still based on one's own cultural perspective. But this, or rather the assumption of cultural similarity, is due to a lack of awareness of one's own culture (Bennett, 1993), or cultural awareness in general.

What seems to mark the progress to *minimisation* from the earlier stages is a change in attitude, not so much in understanding cultural differences (in comparison with *defence*). It seems that cultural differences are recognised only to the degree where differentiation is made of overt behaviour, but not in terms of understanding of the core values of different cultures, and the change in attitude still lacks the quality of

commitment to cultural equality. Lack of empathy is thought to be what prevent people in this stage moving to the ethnorelative stages. Although people with this orientation would show tolerance and flexibility to differences, nevertheless, they would unconsciously use their own cultural worldview to interpret behaviours of other cultures. To move beyond this stage, according to Bennett, it is important for people to accept that "cultures can only be understood relative to one another and that particular behaviour can only be understood within a cultural context." (ibid.:46)

Acceptance is identified as the first of the three ethnorelative stages, which is defined as "the state in which one's own culture is experienced as just one of a number of equally complex worldviews." (Hammer *et al.*, 2003:425) This represents a major change in cultural perspective. Different from the earlier stages, people with *acceptance* worldviews are expected to acknowledge their own culture as a relative cultural construct (Bennett, 1993), and be ready to accept cultural differences in context. But Bennett emphasises that acceptance is not tantamount to agreement. People may disagree with different cultural views or practices, and may judge cultural differences negatively, yet it is important that disagreement, such as choice on ethical issues, has to be based on grounds other than preference for or protection of one's own cultural values. What is essential to the ethnorelative perspective is the assumption that cultural difference is the product of different social environment, and thus should be understood in context and treated with respect.

The concept of *Adaptation* is defined as the state in which one's experience of another culture or cultures enables them to think and act in the way that is appropriate to the culture context/s. In accordance with the intercultural sensitivity development theory, adaptation necessitates the ability to shift frames of reference vis-à-vis the other culture/s. This involves one's own worldview being expanded to include constructs from the other culture/s, and as stated by Bennett (ibid.), this should be an additive process, wherein maintenance of one's original worldview is encouraged. Important to *adaptation* as a stage of development is that one is actively dealing with cultural differences by acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills so as to function or fit into the new cultural environment. What is emphasised as the essential quality of this development is the ability to empathise, which would generate adaptive changes in cognition and behaviour, leading to "cultural pluralism" (1993:57), where people would have alternative perspectives and different sets of knowledge and skills so as to be able to act as situation demands.

The development from *acceptance* to *adaptation* is marked by an increase in the ability to interact and to function effectively in new cultural environments, and that entails especially an increasing development in culture-specific knowledge and skills to understand and react to a new cultural environment. Thus emphasis is shifted from raising awareness and respecting cultural difference at the stage of *acceptance* to acquiring more culture-specific knowledge and skills to relate and communicate with members of a particular culture group or groups at *adaptation* stage. (Bennett, 1993; Hammer *et al.*, 2003) Though in reality, the development may not follow exactly this order, as suggested by the theory, at this stage, one's identity is defined in pluralistic terms, and people may experience an internal clash caused by different frames of reference (Bennett, 1993).

Thus progression to the next stage, *integration*, involves efforts to sort out internal conflicts caused by internalisation of different cultural frames of reference and pluralism in terms of cultural identity. It is suggested that at the stage of *adaptation*, people would identify with different worldviews, and would be oriented to think and act in accordance with contextual requirements (ibid.). This is thought to be 'good enough' as far as efficacy of communication is concerned. However, this cultural plurality may result in identity problems and anxiety, and it is desirable for people to integrate disparities so as to form a coherent sense of identity. At *integration* one's identity is not bound to any particular culture, and according to Adler's concept of 'multicultural person', people at this stage are "always in the process of becoming *a part of* and *apart from* a given cultural context" (Bennett, ibid.:59). At this stage, evaluation of cultural differences would be based on full understanding of differences, and choice for action would be made on ethical grounds instead of cultural preference. This shows the importance of developing critical cultural awareness, as it enables people to break through from the confinement of any single culture. However, from the educational perspective DMIS model lacks the capacity to address the development of this important competence, it only points out that its presence should be a characteristic of the later stages of intercultural sensitivity development such as *integration*.

IDI project raised a similar question over the existence of the separate constructs of *acceptance* and *adaptation*, just like the one between *denial* and *defence*. It is reported that the empirical data fail to yield the expected result. (Hammer *et al.*, 2003) Thus the IDI project treats these two constructs again as a joint one under the abbreviation *A/A*. This might be due to the focus of the research and the way the data

are analysed, but it demonstrates the complexity of measuring progress, and seems to suggest that a willingness to commit to the other culture/s may involve more than an increase in the ability of cultural differentiation, or in other words, expansion or change of worldview – what underlies the DMIS theory – is not easy to measure. However, the development in cognition and behavioural adaptation from *acceptance* to *adaptation* should be significant. First, in order to adapt, one has to learn more intensely about the new culture. Second, as people are more often compelled to confront issues related to their identity when interactions with others become more frequent, it is likely that they would experience more anxiety than at the stage of *acceptance*. To reduce anxiety, according to the theory, people could either move to the further stage of integrating differences into a coherent system or regress into relative passive acceptance. However, as suggested by the theory, anxiety won't disappear until people get to the stage of *constructive marginality*, where people "construct their identities at the margins of two or more cultures and central to none" (Hammer *et al.*, 2003:425). One can find an echo here of the 'third space' that was discussed earlier, where individuals transcend both or all the cultures that they are in contact with, and are able to make judgements about what is right and wrong, or what is appropriate or not on the basis of profound understanding of human relations and relations between human and nature.

DMIS explains how and why people respond to otherness in different ways and points out the key features of each stage of the development in terms of change in perspective. It serves very well as a guide for understanding intercultural competence development. However, the reality is often less clear-cut, as indicated by the outcomes of the research on IDI, to have precise evaluation of development on the basis of increase in sensitivity to cultural difference – the concept central to the theory – is not a straightforward task. Also, in regard to the sequence of the developmental stages, Hammer et al. call for further investigation to examine its accuracy (2003). Overall, as I have presented, the DMIS gives a good explanation of how and why intercultural competence develops and the different forms of responses towards otherness. It should serve as a useful tool to understand intercultural phenomena and different approaches individuals take in their encounters with culturally different others, but the use of it in this research is also a response to the call from Hammer et al.

4.3. The Context of the Assessment

So far in this chapter I have reviewed some arguments and reflections on intercultural competence assessment, and have examined the two models to be applied and combined for data analysis. Now in the remainder of this chapter I will describe the specific context where the assessment is to be done, which should bring the discussion of assessment into a sharper focus. To be more precise, by specifying the learning context and what learning outcomes are expected it will be possible for us to have a clear idea of what would be most relevant for the purpose of this investigation, and subsequently the objectives for the assessment. The discussion will include two aspects: one concerns the learning objectives and the other the learners and their experience abroad. As I explained in the introduction, the original objective was to relate the research findings directly to a course that I have been teaching. Although that is not the case anymore, a description of the context will justify my approach in research, and moreover, may provide relevant reference for other research with similar interests.

4.3.1. Language for Specific Purpose

The course concerned is a specialised language course called Business Chinese. It falls into the category of what is commonly known as language for specific purposes (LSP). LSP is a sub-category of language learning, and what makes a LSP course different from a general language learning course is that such a course is more specifically, or in a sense more narrowly, focused on a particular subject matter, and the language one learns in such a course reflects the characteristic features of that subject matter. More explicitly, for instance, each subject domain has a specific set of jargon and its unique discourse style, such as language of law, language of science, and language of business, etc. Linguistically, Robinson notes: "What is different in each situation is the terminology, the conceptual structure and the rhetorical organisation of the communication." (2000)

Apart from the apparent linguistic differences however, each subject domain differs from others also in terms of social context and relationship, which dictates the specific requirements called for by the subject matter on the one hand, and reflects restrictions and expectations of the wider social environment on the other hand. For example, people in the medical circle do not speak 'the same language' as people doing law, and they would follow a set of rules and norms in communication that also differs significantly from that followed by law professionals. Similarly, people engaged in

business activities in one cultural environment may not appreciate the way business is done differently in another culture. Thus, it is necessary for a LSP course to address the needs of the learner both in terms of professional requirement and intercultural communication to reflect how communication is carried out interculturally between people of the same profession. The difference between various professions with regard to communication is such that studies on subject-specific communication have been called for, for instance, by Bargiela-Chiappini (2004), who proposes the establishment of a research field focusing on intercultural business discourse so as to encourage research co-operation on a wide range of issues regarding interculturality in workplace and business-related communication. From the perspective of business language teaching and learning, Louhiala-Salminen's research on written business communication suggests that the learning activities should be based on the real communicational demands of the profession, thus in the classroom business language "should not be treated as something separate from the real business,... but rather as a thread which is interwoven in everything that happens in businesses" (1996:50).

Within a broad domain such as intercultural business communication there can be found a range of different kinds of issues. With specific regard to intercultural communication, the rapid development in international business interaction and cooperation has inspired a great deal of research in such diverse fields as inter- or cross-cultural communication and international management (e.g. Mead, 1994; Niemeier *et al.*, 1998; Tung and Yeung, 1998; Verckens *et al.*, 1998), intercultural organisational behaviour (e.g. Hofstede, 1980; 1991; Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1997), intercultural human resource management (e.g. McEllister, 1998; Smith, 1996), intercultural negotiation behaviours (e.g. Acuff, 1993; Blackman, 1998); intercultural conflict management (e.g. Brew and Cairns, 2004; Trubisky *et al.*, 1991; Wang, 1998), etc. it goes without saying that each of these fields would have its own focus and require some specific knowledge and skills.

What is common to these studies is an emphasis on the understanding of the profound influence of cultural difference on workplace behaviour, relationships, and ultimately, work efficiency in intercultural business interactions. For instance, some researchers doing comparative studies are led to believe that due to historical legacy and deeply entrenched value differences, the concept of human resource management is "too culturally infused with Western values to be as yet on the Chinese menu" (Heller, 1996:62). In the same vein, different beliefs and values in regard to food and religion

make the Israeli franchise for McDonald's a really hard decision. (Griswold, 1994) Again, research by Tung and Yeung (1998) demonstrates that the concept of *guanxi* (Chinese word for social networking) plays such an imperative role in social relations and interactions in Chinese culture that foreign businesses can hardly afford to ignore it when doing business in China or with Chinese firms, at least in the initial stages of entering the country. No doubt, an understanding of the impact of these cultural differences is essential to successful business operations. With regard to an LSP course, as it is specifically aimed at those who would be expected to use the language skills for the purpose of working professionally across cultures, it seems only logical to say that the issues of cultural awareness and cultural understanding, especially in relation to the profession concerned, have to be addressed in the learning so as to prepare the learner to avoid cultural pitfalls in their future work and communication, and yet this has not been a characteristic of much LSP teaching until very recently, or of teaching materials as can be seen below.

In terms of learning content, what should and could be included in the learning has to be based on the learner's needs as well. In general a decision about what and how much to select for the learning has to be made on the basis of the existing level of knowledge as well as what is perceived most necessary and relevant to the learner's development. However, taken business English as an example, it is pointed out by St John that design of learning materials relies heavily on materials producers' personal experience or intuitions, and she calls for more research "to identify common features of effective communications, to understand the role of cultural influences and the ways in which language and business strategies interact." (1996: 15) More specifically, the concept of language and cultural learning is to integrate the two instead of dealing with cultural learning separately as in the case of intercultural training discussed in Chapter 3. But how to integrate needs for language and culture remains an unsolved problem. In the following I will give first a brief introduction of the general aspect of the business language course, and then a detailed account of the learners so as to provide for necessary information for the contextualisation of the later assessment.

4.3.2. The Business Chinese Language Course

Typical of many LSP courses, the business Chinese language course is designed for learners who have already achieved an intermediate to more advanced level of competence in Chinese language, and the learning content is specifically focused on

international trade and business cooperation. As can be expected of an LSP course, the language learning content is loaded with a lot of business jargon and specialised subject knowledge, and it is in the format of business dialogue. To be able to effectively conduct professional work, it is necessary for the learner to acquire the terminologies and the specific knowledge required by the profession. But that is clearly not enough given the impact of cultural difference on business communication, as demonstrated by the examples given in this chapter. A review of the course and some commonly used learning materials (see appendix 5) shows several issues that need to be addressed if intercultural competence is to be considered an important part of learning.

The first issue is that little attention is paid to the fact that intercultural business communication is different from intra-cultural business communication. There is very little information about how communication is affected by contextual factors, such as cultural identities and relationships between the protagonists. Therefore, the interactions between the supposed businessmen of various cultural backgrounds are just like those between members of the same culture, with no difference in terms of communication style, no difficulties in role identification and in meaning interpretation, etc. Also, it appears that there is no difference between cultures in negotiation styles, especially in conflict management, and everything goes very smoothly. Except the names of the protagonists and the mentioning of a few cities of other countries, one can hardly find any other reference to suggest that the communication happens between members of different cultures. It is possible that professional language might be highly standardised, nevertheless, people from different cultures take different approaches in managing relationships, conveying messages, and handling conflicts, etc., and it is not likely that these would have no effect on cross-cultural communication. As can be seen in the data analysis, different communication styles have significant impact on communication outcomes.

The second issue is the way cultural learning is perceived and addressed. It is not true that culture is neglected completely in the given case. For example, there are some Chinese proverbs and sayings used in the business context, and a few social scenarios such as meeting people, showing hospitality, etc., which are good examples of Chinese social etiquette. Also, there is a short and very general introduction of some social etiquette and taboos in some different cultures in the world, as well as a brief mention here and there of some social institutions relevant to international business operations. Apart from showing hospitality, demonstrating courtesy and so on, it also includes some

social and economic phenomena such as the specific forms of business cooperation preferred and encouraged by the Chinese economy, and a few governmental organisations and institutions concerning international trade and business cooperation. However, the problem is that apart from a general introduction of the more observable cultural features and factual information concerning business operations, little effort is made to encourage the development of cultural awareness and sensitivity to different cultural perspectives, which is right at the centre of intercultural communication. It seems to me that although some effort is made to introduce Chinese culture, yet it fails to address the issue of how culture functions in the processes of social cognition and communication.

In this regard, I suspect that the present case is not uncommon of business language courses or LSP courses in general. What is missing then can be seen from two aspects, which are interrelated. The first one can be understood in terms of cultural awareness. As shown, little effort can be seen in revealing the cultural significance of the social phenomena presented, i.e., showing that they are the manifestations of an abstract system of values and beliefs which guides a cultural community or social group in their worldviews and social conduct, and thus produces an internal social cohesion and consistency of that society. As a result, there is an obvious void in the learning regarding what is behind the behavioural norms. Acquiring discrete information about overt behavioural traits of social conduct does not necessarily lead to good understanding of why people from other culture/s behave the way they do, and subsequently, the learner may end up either following the social norms of the target culture without questioning them or simply rejecting them on the ground of their being strange or unreasonable. Consequently, this does not provide much opportunity for self reflection and self awareness.

The other aspect concerns development in cultural understanding. When culture is presented simply as unrelated facts and behavioural tendencies or ignored, there is little chance for deep learning (Byram 1997a) about the target culture. Also, the deeply seated value assumptions and beliefs easily escape our attention. Sometimes it may appear that a business talk is predominantly technical, showing little obvious cultural reference, yet there still is a strong cultural presence behind it, exerting influence on linguistic as well as extra-, and non-linguistic aspects of communication, for instance, to whom, when and where to talk, or indeed, not to talk, and how to conduct a talk, etc. Moreover, as suggested by the earlier mentioned research, the impact of cultural

differences can be found not only on face-to-face business talk, but on every aspect of intercultural business operation and interactions, from business writing to issues such as decision making, management style, etc., because workplace relationships and behaviours as well as attitudes to work, are deeply affected by the core values and beliefs people hold, and thus differ from culture to culture. Not addressing the issue of developing cultural awareness and intercultural learning would therefore ill serve the needs of the learner, as they may end up with little awareness of the demands and challenges of a multicultural work environment and having difficulties to communicate and work effectively and satisfactorily. The above discussion may be relevant to other business language courses, as the general aim of such course is to prepare the learner to work across cultures.

4.3.3. The Informants – the Student Sojourners

To appreciate the data, which are to be presented in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, it is necessary to have some ideas about the students who participated in the research as informants, and whose generosity in sharing their experience has enabled the researcher to conduct this research and hence gain good insights into the issue of intercultural competence development through sojourn. The students are at the centre of this research from two perspectives. One is that their experiences of handling intercultural communication and living and working abroad are the object of this study. On the other hand, it is the desire to understand their situation in terms of learning needs that has shaped the design and contextualisation of this research. Below I will introduce some background information such as the students' experience of the target language and culture before sojourn and the general situation of their sojourn.

All those who took part in the research were students of Chinese in their second year of a four-year university degree course. In accordance with a traditional practice in UK universities, which requires students doing language subject to have a year abroad as part of their course learning (Alred and Byram, 2006), the students spent their second year in Beijing. All these students were British and almost all of them had little experience of Chinese language and culture before taking the Chinese degree course, but they had experience of learning other European languages previously. So, before going abroad, they had learnt Chinese language and culture for one year at the university, with extensive language training and some so called background courses about the history, geography, and traditions of East Asian countries, including China.

During their stay in China, apart from attending academic courses in Renmin Daxue (The People's University) in Beijing, the students were expected to have a lot of opportunities, such as work experience, socialising in various forms, to contact or interact with Chinese people and to observe their cultural practices.

It was always the case that while in Beijing most of our students had some work experience of one kind or another, i.e., working for multinational or Chinese companies, big or small, teaching at schools, or doing odd jobs such as modelling, participating in TV advertising, etc., This particular group of students were no exception, in one way or another, to different degrees, they had some work experience in China, which enabled them to have some personal experience of multicultural workplaces. Generally speaking, most of the students, including this particular group, reported they had good relationship/friendship with the Chinese people they encountered and found their experience in China very enjoyable. In fact, a lot of them spoke very warmly about what they had experienced in China and stated their strong desire to go back sooner or later either for work or visit. Some of them had been in regular contact with their Chinese friends after returning to UK. The year abroad obviously enables them to have a lot of first-hand experience of Chinese culture.

The students who took part in the research joined in on voluntary basis. Originally, it was the intention of the researcher to invite participation from those who would consider taking the business Chinese language course upon their return to UK, but as I shall explain in the next chapter, due to some unexpected occurrence, things did not always work out as exactly as planned, but with some interesting outcomes. As learning about perceptions and knowledge of intercultural workplace is an important part of this study, I am interested in the students' work experience in China. As can be seen later from the data analysis, their work experience forms a very important part of their sojourn experience, and provides them with the sort of knowledge that it is often unavailable from classroom learning. It gave them some idea of what it means to work across cultures.

For years I had the impression that most of our students were emotionally very positive about their sojourn experience in China. In accordance with culture shock theory, this should serve as a good testimony that they must have adapted reasonably well to their new environment and felt that their goals had been achieved to a satisfactory level, whatever that was. The research paid attention to the emotional

response of the students to their sojourn experience in order to find out positive links between emotions and intercultural competence, as is suggested by cultural learning theory discussed in earlier chapters. Although emotional response to sojourning experience could be due to various factors, both environmental and personal, yet, it is clear from the earlier discussion on culture shock and emotional management that psychological well-being is deeply affected by perception of being in control of the situation, i.e., being able to function and to socialise effectively in a new cultural context. More specifically, some studies on student sojourning show that good relationships with host nationals are positively related to sojourn satisfaction and better psychological adjustment (Ward *et al.*, 2001). More recently, Ryan and Twibell's study (2000) on students sojourning echoes the point that social relationships with host nationals is a major stress-inducing factor.

4.4. The Objectives of the Assessment

Now I have built up the context that shaped the design of this research work. The specific nature of the LSP course and the work experience of the students in China directed my attention to intercultural communicational behaviour in the workplace. A lot of attention was paid to the work experience that the students had during their sojourn, though the general aspect of coping with stress and adaptation is very much part of the experience. I have established the viewpoint in the previous discussion that developing intercultural competence is necessary for working and living across cultures, but more specifically, due to the process of globalisation developing intercultural competence has becoming an important issue for international organisations and businesses, and a lot of research has been carried out on areas such as intercultural workplace and comparative studies of work-related behaviours.

The literature on international or cross-cultural business or work-related interaction shows that despite a wide range of topics being investigated, they can be seen as centred on two main issues, which are not unrelated: work efficiency in the intercultural workplace and cross-cultural cooperation on the one hand, and overseas assignment or sojourn difficulties on the other hand.

In regard to the former, a lot of work has been done in identifying behavioural patterns and their underlying conceptual assumptions, and more importantly, the impact of the differences on workplace relationship, work efficiency, and management styles, etc. For example, with the increasingly intensified global economic cooperation and

interaction, and the steady growth of transnational firms, it is paramount for international companies to adopt a collaborative cross-cultural learning approach, especially for transnational firms where management is formed of different cultures with equal status as "cross-cultural interaction takes place both within the organization and between the organization and its external environment" (Bartholomew and Adler 1996:24). Obviously managing cultural difference is a big challenge both to international business firms and to individuals who work across cultures. A popular approach to this challenge is to find out the cultural orientations of those involved and act accordingly, because culture, as Trompenaars puts it, "is the way in which a group of people solves problems." (1993:6)

As it is quite evident now, intercultural competence development is essential to successful intercultural or cross-cultural business operation and work-related interactions. It is my assumption that through their sojourn experience the students must have developed a lot of knowledge, skills and attitudes to cope with the intercultural challenge they encountered. Based on this assumption, the assessment will be focused on the following about the learners (mostly adapted from the objectives proposed in Byram's ICC model in accordance with the specific context of this research):

- Whether they have demonstrated an interest and the skills to discover different perspectives, including work-related issues;
- Whether they have demonstrated an interest and the skills to establish friendship with people of cultures other than their own;
- Their experience of coping with culture shock, and evidence of knowledge and skills in psychological and sociocultural adaptation;
- Whether they have demonstrated the willingness in as well as evidence of shifting perspectives in interpreting social phenomena and behaviours;
- Whether they have demonstrated the willingness and the ability to question and criticise constructively the values and presumptions both in their own cultural practices and that of Chinese culture;
- Whether they have acquired sufficient knowledge of the historical, economic, and sociopolitical aspects of Chinese culture to understand how its social organisations operate;
- Whether they have shown awareness of any differences between Chinese culture and their own in terms of communication styles and other social practices, including workplace values and work-related behaviours, and

whether they are able to identify misunderstanding and dysfunctions. If they do, whether they are able to offer viable explanations of these;

- Whether they have experienced difficulties in intercultural communication, and whether they have demonstrated or can demonstrate the knowledge and skills required to overcome such difficulties.

4.5. Establishing the Framework for Data Analysis

Earlier I said that I am attracted to the idea of applying and combining two different models, Bennett's developmental model and Byram's ICC model, in my assessment of IC development. One option is to use them separately and the other is to use them in a joint manner. I chose the latter and decided to try to establish the common ground between the two and then form the framework for data analysis on that basis. As I explained in Chapter 2, since the term adaptation is used both in the context of cross-cultural adaptation and the context of Bennett's developmental theory, to differentiate, I will use italics for the particular stage of intercultural sensitivity development described by Bennett as *adaptation*.

4.5.1. Incorporating the Two Models

What comes out of this can be said as parsimonious if the objective is to discover something new, but there are certainly some advantages. The most obvious one is that the data are 'double checked', as the two models take quite different approaches. Also, the differences between them help the researcher to have a wider perspective, and the outcomes of the assessment suggest that they are mutually supportive, which improves the analysis.

Now I am going to explain how they are used together. Because ICC model is more comprehensive and much easier to operate than DMIS, it is used as the basis for the operational tool. But to adapt it to the specific research context and to include a developmental perspective, I need to first establish the necessary links between the two models by examine the relations between the stages of development of DMIS with the threshold level, and that involves looking into the conceptualisation of the different stages and the assumed behavioural and cognitive representations in corresponding to each stage. After that, I will present the framework which is to some extent adapted to the context of this specific research.

Bennett's model includes three ethnocentric stages and three ethnorelative stages, as shown earlier in this chapter. My attention here will be focused mostly on what are conceptualised as the ethnorelative stages, i.e., respect for behavioural difference and respect for value difference under the construct of *acceptance*; empathy and pluralism under *adaptation*, and contextual evaluation and constructive marginality under *integration.* But a few words have to be said about the ethnocentric stages, although relatively less emphasis will be place on them. One reason is that, as far as I am concerned, except *minimisation*, these are unlikely to be the stages where the students would remain, or to be the consistent features of their behaviours, and are therefore relatively unimportant to this investigation, because in fact almost all of them showed positive attitudes towards their sojourn, and it is hard to imagine that they would have enjoyed it if they had totally ignored the cultural differences or taken a very negative attitude towards the host culture during their sojourn. Also, it is not very likely that the students would be consistently in the stages of *denial* or *defence* when they have made their own choice and spent a lot of time to study Chinese language and culture. But more importantly, as the ethnocentric stages are not relevant to the ICC model, there is not much need to discuss them when the purpose of the discussion is to relate the two. Having said that, I think a distinction should be made between occasional defensive behaviours and being in consistent state of defence.

The stage of *denial* is characterised as either unaware of or intentionally keep distance from culturally different others in terms of attitudes, and having "*no categories for cultural difference*" or "*wide categories for cultural difference*" (Bennett, 1993:31. Quotations were originally in italics) in terms of knowledge. The stage of *defence* represents a progress in sensitivity to cultural differences, but difference are treated as a threat to one's cultural identity or world reality, and therefore actions such as negative stereotyping and/or degrading are consequently taken to as counter measures to keep one's worldviews. (1993) *Denial* does not have too much to do with the current case, but in my view, negative stereotyping and degrading could occur now and then as contingency responses to situations even when an individual has moved beyond the stage of *defence*. So I think it is necessary to make a distinction between them. *Minimisation* seems to be a common reaction to cultural differences. With this form, people focus on similarities between cultures and pay little attention to differences. Although difference is not rejected at this stage, unless individuals make effort to

understand differences and to empathise, they are not able to move out of ethnocentric thinking.

I will thus focus on the constructs of the ethnorelative stages and try to identify how they are related to the different aspects of ICC model. The intention is that by so doing, it is possible to find out not only the presence and absence of the indicators of development in different aspects of intercultural competence, i.e., attitude, knowledge, and behaviour, but also whether those can be understood in developmental terms.

In applying Bennett's developmental theory in this study, a couple of points need to be made here. To begin with, DMIS is presented as descriptions of subjective experience, thus includes concepts such as respect for behavioural differences, respect for value differences, empathy, pluralism, contextual evaluation, etc. Although it is cognitively oriented, it does imply development in terms of attitudes, cognition, and skills, the three dimensions of intercultural competence. However, it is not easy to see what is involved in the development from stage to stage in terms of the different aspects of the competence. Also, as the construct centres predominantly on the competence to discriminate differences between cultures, it has obvious limitations in evaluating behavioural and attitudinal aspects of the development, and this might be one reason why difficulties occurred in separating the stages of *acceptance* and *adaptation* in the IDI (Intercultural Development Inventory) project, which I mentioned in Chapter 3. Moreover, as the model is based on the concept that the more complex one's perceptual structure is about the different culture/s or worldviews, the more interculturally sensitive he or she would become, hence more capable of handling intercultural interactions, the development is thus presented in a upward linear fashion. The theory behind the model is quite comprehensive, but the model is rather simplistic and lacks the mechanism to tackle the issue of intercultural competence in its totality. In particular, how the process of development is being affected by various factors not accounted for, and thus it is difficult to identify details in progression.

Despite the simplification and lack of precision, as Kim (2001) argues, learning does seem to take place in a manner of a spiral progress, and this upward linear representation can be viewed as an overall reflection of the general developmental pattern of intercultural competence, i.e., moving from a relatively simple cognitive structure to a more complex one, and from conceptual understanding to behavioural adaptation, showing not only an increase in understanding of the differences between

cultures, but also an increase in terms of willingness and capability to shift frames of reference in social interactions. From this perspective, this developmental model can provide good guidance in understanding IC development. But in operation care has to be exercised because it is dangerous to assume that the three different aspects of the competence will always develop simultaneously. Secondly, progress from cognitive oriented *acceptance* to behavioural oriented *adaptation* requires more than cognitive development, and it is important to develop the skills to cope with situational demands, such as eliciting meanings from others or relating. It can be argued then that the developmental model proposed by Bennett could be more effectively applied in practical assessment if it could be expanded to include means to evaluate more explicitly individuals' abilities to interact with and relate to different cultures as well to assess cognitive development.

It is also important in assessing behavioural adaptation to distinguish conscious adaptive behaviours from simple imitations. It is not rare that appropriate behaviours turn out to be copying different behavioural norms without the actor's real understanding of the implications of the norms. So in taking behavioural adaptation as an indicator of progression into a more advanced stage of development, it is necessary to distinguish adaptive actions from imitations. Adaptive action has to be based on an understanding of the other's perspective, and therefore the person who takes such an action can be expected to have some explicit ideas of how the cultures involved are different, and perhaps even to have some clear ideas of why certain actions are taken or expected in given situations. Consequently there should be a consistency in one's behaviour.

Thus it is evident that DMIS lacks the precision to describe intercultural competence in its totality. As has been shown, the organising principle of this theory is that the process of developing intercultural competence is basically a process of becoming increasingly sensitive to different worldviews. We can see that from the point of being able to recognise and respect behavioural difference to the point of being able to identify and respect underlying cultural values, one becomes indeed increasingly cognitively aware of differences between cultures. But what skills and knowledge this development entails is not clear in the model. It can be argued that it is self evident that being able to understand and thus respect value differences entails positive attitude towards and the ability to identify the differences. It maybe so, but from the perspective

of assessment this lack of explicitness makes it difficult to evaluate individuals' progresses.

Having explained the advantages and difficulties in using DMIS as an assessment tool, it is now important to discuss the major features of development from *acceptance* to *integration*, that are useful to the discussion in the next section. The move from *acceptance* to the early stage of *adaptation*, i.e., from respect for behavioural and value differences to empathy, which is described as a "temporary shift in perspective" by Bennett (1993:54), has to be based on more than cognitive development. To empathise entails the motivation to shift frames of reference and often the skills to communicate one's views and feelings. Indeed, Bennett pointed out that "[A] major concern in the adaptation stage is developing alternative communication skills." (1993:52) Thus development from empathy to pluralism, the second phase of adaptation, should be marked by significant increase in knowledge and skills needed to produce behaviours that are appropriate to the cultural environment. In other words, one becomes increasingly efficient in communication and interaction in the new cultural environment.

But more significantly perhaps, pluralism is also associated with a higher level of motivation. Along with the process of internalising a new set of worldviews, individuals have to resolve the issue of how to identify with the new cultural system. According to Bennett, except for the case of being oppressed by dominant cultures, for people in pluralism the form "respect for difference" is equivalent to "respect for self" (1993:55), because the different culture has become part of their identity. However, he pointed out, to achieve this stage usually requires quite extensive experience of another culture: "[T]he minimum time spent in a different culture needed to develop rudimentary pluralism seems to be around two years" (1993). This implies that pluralism and the stage of *integration* are probably what the students were yet to achieve, if the theory holds for this group of sojourners.

The key issue for *integration* is identity. Different from pluralism, where people usually identify themselves with more than one culture, *integration* is a stage where people do not base their identity on any single culture, instead they tend to "integrate disparate aspects of identity into a new whole while remaining culturally marginal" (1993:60), becoming what Adler described as the multicultural person. This is explained as the result of an effort to resolve the "internal culture shock" generated by a clash between different worldviews. (1993) This reminds us of the concept of "third place"

being discussed earlier, where people base their decisions purely on what they perceive to be right and appropriate to the situations they are in, in accordance with their worldviews that are ever evolving, not on the basis of cultural affiliation.

However, in our earlier discussion, an argument was made that intercultural education should encourage independent thinking and the competence to criticise the existing practice or establishment that is unethical or unsatisfactory. This implies, among other things, that it is necessary to break free from the constraint of cultural affiliation, and to avoid accepting uncritically anything that is in the name of cultural difference. Different from what is discussed above, where the change is driven by "internal culture shock", this is a deliberate effort to encourage the development of awareness and skills to handle difficult intercultural situations involving cultural identity and conflicts in values. The point is, even if they do not have a near-native understanding of other cultures, people are still able to make well informed judgements of situations if they make enough effort to seek understanding of different perspectives and are aware of the need to be independent in thinking.

In the following stage of the discussion, therefore, I shall establish links between the construct discussed above and the ICC model, which will be used as the main basic framework, but to adapt to the specific context of my investigation, some slight alterations will be made to it. To be more specific, the original structure of ICC model containing five categories will be followed, but small changes will be made to the specifications, which are termed 'objectives', under each category. The change is in terms of reflecting different emphasis on level of development and areas of activity. Following that, I will suggest how I interpret these 'objectives' from the perspective of a developmental approach and what signs can serve as markers of progression from stage to stage.

Finally, in carrying out the data analysis, apart from examining the ability to communicate cross-culturally, attention will also be paid to the abilities to manage stress and relationships in the process of making intercultural adjustment. As the two are closely related, yet separate phenomena, the influence of them on each other can thus be explored to help to explain the conditions of their experiential learning and the impact on their development, but the main focus will be kept on the development in ICC. Therefore, the framework to be applied in data evaluation is predominantly focused on ICC development. The advantage of addressing the issue of stress

management and forming relationships (here mainly with host members) is to have a chance of gaining more information in relation to motivational and skills development.

4.5.2. The Formation of the Framework

The framework can be regarded as consisting of two parts, although it does not literally contain two independent bodies. To be more precise, what can be counted as the first part is Byram's ICC model with my suggestions of how to use it in my case, and the second part is the criteria to be used for evaluating the progression of ICC competence, which is formed by bringing links to some of the constructs I take from Bennett's model and the descriptors of the criteria, what is termed the 'objectives' in the ICC model. The original structure of the ICC model will not change. In the following I will quote Byram's model section by section, and after each, I will state what and why alterations, if any, are to be made to the objectives stated, and will suggest in what way these objectives are linked to the constructs from the developmental model. A summary of criteria for developmental assessment will be made at the end of the discussion.

The first component of the ICC model is *attitudes*, and it is conceptualised as "[C]uriosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own." (Byram, 1997a:50) Its objectives are:

- willingness to seek out or take up opportunities to engage with otherness in a relationship of equality; this should be distinguished from attitudes of seeking out the exotic or of seeking to profit from others;
- interest in discovering other perspectives on interpretation of familiar and unfamiliar phenomena both in one's own and in other cultures and cultural practices;
- willingness to question the values and presuppositions in cultural practices and products in one's own environment;
- readiness to experience the different stages of adaptation to and interaction with another culture during a period of residence;
- readiness to engage with the conventions and rites of verbal and non-verbal communication and interaction.

These objectives are clearly focused on reaching out for and active engagement with otherness, emphasising open and flexible attitudes and a desire to understand cultural differences. As intercultural communication tends to be more ambiguous than intra-cultural communication and anxiety inducing, I think it necessary to recognise the importance of being willing to exercise patience and tolerance for ambiguity, which are essential for successful communication. This is especially relevant if a developmental perspective is taken. At less advanced stages of ethnorelativism such as *acceptance*, people would lack the confidence and skills to effectively engage in seeking for

information or to exchange views and could thus be overwhelmed by the unfamiliar situation. A willingness to be tolerant of ambiguity would enable individuals to engage rather than withdraw from social interactions. With development of skills and competence for discovering and negotiating meanings one would become gradually less dependent on tolerance, although it is always the case that intercultural communication is full of challenges and exercising patience and tolerance is always useful. As for how to perceive these attitudinal features in relation to the stages of DMIS, I would say that people at *acceptance* stage would not have developed these attitudes, as the important feature of this stage, according to Bennett, is to recognise and acknowledge cultural differences, which "begin to elicit curiosity rather than animosity" (Bennett, 1993:48).

Proposed as a 'threshold', the ICC model set a set of criteria for a competent intercultural speaker who is capable of mediating between different cultures. Some of the objectives are more demanding than others. For my purpose for assessment, the framework for assessment should include some other attitudinal features, which may be more prominent at an early stage of ethnorelative development, such as what I suggested above, the willingness to exercise patience and tolerance for ambiguity, as well as other features such as willingness to learn about and accept differences. For the purpose of discrimination, I would label these features as 'fundamental' or 'more advanced', and to reach the threshold and above, the 'more advance' qualities must be present. From this perspective, the first and the last of the objectives of the ICC model can also be regarded to be 'fundamental', as one may have the willingness to make some effort to interact with members of other culture/s and to some extent observe different behavioural norms, yet not be ready to explore and empathise with different perspectives, or to negotiate shared meanings with the other. In a way this type of behavioural adaptation is still superficial, so unless one is interested in learning others' worldviews and has a readiness to emphasise, he or she would not be fully competent. Thus the readiness to empathise with different worldviews is regarded the watershed in the process of development

The next component of the criteria is *knowledge*, which is described as: "of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction", and its objectives are (knowledge of/about)

- historical and contemporary relationships between one's own and one's interlocutor's countries

- the means of achieving contact with interlocutors from another country (at a distance or in proximity), of travel to and from and the institutions which facilitate contact or help resolve problems
- the types of causes and process of misunderstanding between interlocutors of different cultural origins
- the national memory of one's own country and how its events are related to and seen from the perspective of one's interlocutor's country
- the national memory of one's interlocutor's country and the perspective on it from one's own
- the national definition of geographical space in one's own country and how these are perceived from the perspective of other countries
- the national definition of geographical space in one's interlocutor's country and the perspective on them from one's own
- the processes and institutions of socialisation in one's own and one's interlocutor's country
- social distinctions and their principal markers, in one's own country and one's interlocutor's
- institutions, and perceptions of them, which impinge on daily life within one's own and one's interlocutor's country and which conduct and influence relationships between them
- the processes of social interaction in one's interlocutor's country. (Byram, 1997a:51)

This list covers a wide range of knowledge both in regard to understanding the process of intercultural communication and cultural systems. In corresponding with what is expected of a competent intercultural mediator in terms of attitudes, here we can see an emphasis on knowing how to reach out for otherness and prevent social dysfunctions, such as gaining access to members of other cultures, understanding different cultural assumptions, especially in regard to cultural identity, etc.

The listed objectives seem to suggest that the author places emphasis on the concept of intercultural mediation rather than adaptation, which is in line with his proposal of the intercultural speaker. That is to say, emphasis is placed on understanding the cultural assumptions of both one's own culture and that of the interlocutor's instead of on attempting to achieve native competence. Similar in terms of emphasising understanding of value differences, the developmental theory posits that the process of becoming intercultural competent is the process of becoming increasingly sensitive to different worldviews. But the basis of this development is an awareness that one's worldview is but one of many equally valid interpretations of the world. From a developmental perspective, knowledge of this sort must be present at any of the ethnorelative stages, and at *acceptance* stage, even if one does not understand why members of other cultures do things differently one should be able to recognise some overt differences. To be able to engage in social interactions with members of other cultures it is necessary to have some ideas of how relations and perceptions are affected

by value differences and how identity issues that are affected by historical, political and other factors. So knowledge such as cultural assumptions, significant social or historic events or public figures, etc. would be in the 'more advanced' category.

A note has to be made that in this investigation, the focus is mostly on the development of awareness in terms of intercultural communication on the one hand and the impact of cultural differences on workplace behaviours on the other hand, with special attention to communication styles. Thus the data only represent part of the knowledge range of the students, and this means the assessment of this aspect will not include some of the areas listed above.

The third component of the ICC model is *skills of interpreting and relating*. It is presented as: "Ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own." The objectives are (ability to):

- identify ethnocentric perspectives in a document or event and explain their origins;
- identify areas of misunderstanding and dysfunction in an interaction and explain them in terms of each of the cultural systems present;
- mediate between conflicting interpretations of phenomena. (1997a:52)

This requires a clear understanding of the difference between two cultures if one is able to identify and explain ethnocentric perspectives or dysfunctions. Thus, the above listed objectives are mostly relevant to the stage of *adaptation*. However, it seems that even at the early stage of development, it is also possible to identify and explain some overt differences between cultures, such as how in some cultures people bow to each other as a greeting, and in others people shake hands. But unless people gain considerable understanding of another culture, their explanation will not include the other's perspective/s. So being able to shift perspectives or not is a marker of moving to a more advanced stage of adaptation. The last criterion, about mediation is a characteristic that can only be found beyond *acceptance*.

Another set of skills are grouped under the category of *skills of discovery and interpretation*. They are introduced as: "[A]bility to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction." Here are the objectives (ability to):

- elicit from an interlocutor the concepts and values of documents or events and to develop an explanatory system susceptible of application to other phenomena;

- identify significant references within and across cultures and elicit their significance and connotations;
- identify similar and dissimilar processes of interaction, verbal and non-verbal, and negotiate an appropriate use of them in specific circumstances;
- use in real-time an appropriate combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes to interact with interlocutors from a different country and culture, taking into consideration the degree of one's existing familiarity with the country and culture and the extent of difference between one's own and the other;
- identify contemporary and past relationships between one's own and the other culture and country;
- identify and make use of public and private institutions which facilitate contact with other countries and cultures;
- use in real-time knowledge, skills and attitudes for mediation between interlocutors of one's own and a foreign culture. (1997a:52-3)

The above list of skills reflects an emphasis on engaging with otherness, overcoming information shortage, and negotiating mutually acceptable situational relationships between different perspectives. Broadly speaking, these skills can be seen as having two functions: gathering information, finding out different perspectives, and therefore expectations of each other; and conveying to others one's own views and positions, signifying intentions and meanings by acting in an understandable and acceptable manner.

The presence of these skills will be a clear indication of understanding the process of intercultural interaction. From a developmental perspective, items number 1, 2, 5 in the skills list are likely to be associated more closely with a more advanced stage of development, although almost all the listed skills are necessary for actively adapting to a new cultural environment, and therefore would not feature strongly at the stage of *acceptance*. Some of the most fundamental skills such as skills of listening, exercising patience, being tolerant of ambiguity, suspending judgements, and so on are not explicated, but assumed, probably referred to as part of the skills mentioned at the end of the list. These skills are important at all stages of development, but to develop beyond the *acceptance* the other 'more advanced' skills must be present.

Critical cultural awareness/political education is the last component of the model, which is defined as: "An ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries." The objectives are (ability to):

- identify and interpret explicit or implicit values in documents and events in one's own and other cultures;
- make an evaluative analysis of the documents and events which refers to an explicit perspective and criteria;

- interact and mediate in intercultural exchanges in accordance with explicit criteria, negotiating where necessary a degree of acceptance of them by drawing upon one's knowledge, skills and attitudes. (1997a:53)

These objectives suggest that a clear understanding of the value assumptions behind cultural practices of one's own culture as well as the interactant's culture is essential for the development of critical cultural awareness. It was mentioned earlier that it is necessary to suspend making judgements of different cultural behaviours. However, this doesn't mean that differences should be accepted or followed blindly in the name of cultural difference. Rather, differences should be understood in relation to given situations, which include other frames of reference. This is not only important for an individual to understand the communication context he or she is in, but is also significant in terms of personal growth. Some cultural practices, even though commonly accepted in some societies, are not necessarily correct or acceptable in accordance with individuals' ethical standards. The important thing is that the judgement has to be made on a basis which is beyond one's own cultural bias. So looking into the differences between cultures in values and beliefs could help people to make well informed decisions, and thus would enable them to better handle difficult situations or moral dilemmas. From the perspective of personal growth, this encourages the development of independent thinking and even moral responsibility, as it offers an opportunity for individuals to confront different views and to challenge the assumptions they are familiar with.

From developmental perspective, this development has to be based on clear understanding of different perspectives, and so is likely to be more closely related to a more advanced stage. Bennett's developmental model does not contain this concept of critical cultural awareness. However, a connection can be built between the idea of developing the competence to consolidate different views and beliefs without cultural bias, which is central to the stage of *integration*, where differences are expected to be dealt with on an individual basis rather than on the basis of any particular frame of reference. It appears that such a development is treated in Bennett's descriptive model as a sign of 'maturity' in the process of intercultural development, which is based on a great familiarity with both or all of the cultures involved. While obviously sharing the view that such an ability is the outcome of deep understanding of the world reality, Byram's educational model pays attention to promoting the development of the skills to achieve the 'maturity', and addresses it as part of the process of becoming interculturally competent.

As a state of development, *integration* seems likely to be the stage that is beyond the current level of development of the students in this investigation, but as part of the process toward the direction of *integration*, the development of critical cultural awareness should be addressed in an educational endeavour. To recall a point that I mentioned earlier, there have been reflections from business and industry that it has been a problem for many people who work cross-culturally to resolve dilemmas that involve challenges to their ethical standards. It is also important in a more general sense, because such a development forms part of the ability to critique what is accepted as norms and the ability to think independently and creatively (Byram, 1997a). In terms of progression, the skills in this category are more likely to be found in the stage of *adaptation*, because only then would people have meaningful encounters with and get insights into other cultures.

Now having explained in detail how I see the two models being used together to evaluate IC development, and with the specific context of my data collection in mind, I am able to summarise as following the framework that is to be used in the assessment:

Attitudes – other extra criteria will be added to this dimension, which are:

- willing to listen to others or different points of view
- willing to be patient and tolerant for ambiguity
- willing to respect different ways of thinking and behaving

These qualities, in my view, are the dominating features of the stage of *acceptance*, and although they are important to the development at all stages, their significance will be outweighed by more active engagement with differences. People at *acceptance* stage should have interest in contact with others, and therefore this stage will also include the following criteria from the ICC model:

- willingness to seek out or take up opportunities to engage with otherness in a relationship of equality
- readiness to engage with the conventions and rites of verbal and non-verbal communication and interaction

The rest of the criteria of ICC model, as I explained earlier, seem to be beyond *acceptance*. But the quality of "willingness to question the values and presuppositions in cultural practices and products in one's own environment", shows a higher level of the ability to 'decentre' and a higher level of awareness of the tendency of cultural bias

in terms of social judgements in intercultural interactions. It thus shows a readiness to move to the stage of *integration*.

Knowledge – Some alterations are to be made to this in two aspects. Firstly, the various causes of misunderstanding and dysfunction in intercultural communication are grouped together in the ICC model, but it would be very helpful to distinguish features that are more typical to one stage than another when attempting to spot signs of progression. The following are more relevant to the *acceptance* stage:

- be able to recognise the key factors that impact on intercultural communication and the fact that intercultural communication is stress inducing
- knowing how to minimise negative impacts of these difficulties on relationships and communication or interaction

For the *adaptation stage* it should include:

- understanding relationship between value system and behaviour
- understanding the impact of self identity on relationship and meaning perception
- knowing how to avoid misinterpretation or attribution error

The scope of the investigation is relatively narrowly focused and thus attention is correspondingly paid mostly to areas that the students are expected to learn about, including the following (some draw heavily upon the ICC model):

- behavioural differences between the cultures concerned, especially in relation to work-related behaviours
- differences in communication style between the cultures concerned
- events, ideas, objects to which members of each of the cultures are emotionally attached
- important values and beliefs that forms the basis of the host cultural system

Although people at the *acceptance* stage may have good ideas of the observable differences in regard to the first three categories, only those who have reached *adaptation* or beyond are able to link the different aspects together.

Skills of interpreting and relating – People in the *acceptance* stage may have a limited degree of skills of this sort. However, the skills of "mediate between conflicting interpretations of phenomena" look certainly beyond the stage of *acceptance*.

Skills of discovering and interactions – To the list provided in the ICC model a few 'fundamental' skills are to be added, which I believe to be essential for the stage of *acceptance*, and they are important part of mindful interactions. These are:

- being patient, tolerant when encountering ambiguity
- being good at listening
- showing courtesy and respect
- being flexible in conflict situations and non-judgemental

To move beyond *acceptance*, skills for better communication and interaction, such as eliciting different meanings, mediating between different perspectives, etc. have to be present. So the criteria specified in the ICC are mostly relevant to the stage of *adaptation*.

Critical cultural awareness – As said above, this competence is associated mostly to a higher level of intercultural competence. If there is a presence of a consistency in making unbiased judgements, or constructive criticism of a system or a reality, showing clear understanding of their causes and consequences, this would mean a construction of a new way of thinking, and is thus a move towards Bennett's third stage.

Chapter Five

The Design, the Procedure of the Research, and the Methodological Issues

As indicated in the introduction, the scale of the investigation is small, and the nature of this study is exploratory – to find out the level of development of intercultural competence in a specific context, about which I have explained in the previous chapter. The contextual situation means that the research is carried out against a general educational background and the focus is on the sojourn experience, with special interest in the work experience, of a group of UK university students of Chinese studies. The nature of this investigation means that, on the one hand, detailed investigation of the specific setting is required so that as much information as possible can be gathered for the understanding of the issue. This is necessary, because first of all, to be able to view any situation in developmental terms involves evaluation, in whatever form or to whatever degree, but so far there are no commonly adopted formulas for the evaluation of intercultural competence similar to what has been used for testing linguistic competences. But more importantly, as shown in the literature review, intercultural competence is perceived to comprise three aspects, i.e., attitudes, knowledge/skills, and behaviour, and therefore unless a comprehensive understanding is achieved including all three aspects of the development, it is not possible to have a clear view about what the learner has acquired and what needs to be further developed.

This small scale investigation, on the other hand, has limitations in terms of generalisability, as the purpose of this quest is to understand the specific issues of the case concerned instead of trying to prove or to test the commonality of certain social phenomena or the representativeness of certain general rules and principles. However, as I have said in the introduction, the outcomes of this study may contribute to the general understanding of the issues such as intercultural education, intercultural communication etc, as this study touches some of the issues that are the common interest of many in these fields. It may also generate further interest in similar studies. In the following, I will explain the design, the procedure of the study and the methods used in data collection and analysis. Ethical and validity issues will also be dealt with.

5.1. The Nature of the Study, and Methods and Methodology

The general aims and the background of this research have been introduced in Chapter One, but to enable an appreciation of the way the research was conducted, it is

useful to give a further account of the specific context of the research and the research problems that lead to methodological decisions. I will discuss below the focus of the study and the issues regarding the participants, location, and time of the research, which all contribute to the decisions on research methods and methodology.

I introduced in chapter 1 that the aim of this research is to investigate at a particular educational setting – a foreign language course for specific purposes on the one hand, and a group of students who have just completed their year abroad study with some due to take the business Chinese language course on the other hand. With the view that IC competence development should be important part of business language teaching and that effective teaching can only be based on an understanding of the learner's needs, this investigation tries to explore: first, the need for developing IC competence from the perspectives of language education in general and business language learning in particular, which has to take into consideration the aspect of professional development; and second, the need for IC development from the perspective of the learner, that is, their existing level of IC competence and its implications for further development.

As has been said already, due to the unexpected change, the significance of the last issue as the central part of the research has diminished, which means the discussion in this regard will be more general rather than dealing with the specific issues of the course design and pedagogy.

Some of the answers to the above questions have to be found from literature, and some obtained through field work, such as the level of the intercultural competence of the student, as information of this sort is very much context bound and has to be elicited from the students themselves. In assessing their existing intercultural competence, I choose to focus on their sojourn experience instead of including their other experiences, such as previous classroom learning, travelling, etc, but this doesn't mean that those are excluded. The decision is made on the ground that the sojourn experience is their most recent experience of the target, or indeed, another culture, and of course, it is an extension of their earlier experiences. Also, it is the most accessible route to their 'reserve' of intercultural competence. Another important reason is that work experience forms a very interesting part of their sojourn experience, and given that intercultural work-related interactions is an important aspect of this research, it is very useful to know whether a development is made in terms of awareness and understanding of

intercultural or multicultural workplace and work-related behaviours. Last but not least, although it goes without saying that learning a language and culture through direct contact is very different from classroom learning, it would be very interesting if it were possible to get any insight into the issue of what the differences are through this study. Obviously, such a choice will limit the scope of information, but this has to be sacrificed so as to focus on the main aims of the study.

This research attempts to understand a particular situation, and therefore is interested in an in-depth knowledge of the specific phenomenon in a holistic manner, rather than the cause-and-effect relationships between various factors or any statistical probabilities, which characterise experimental research. (e.g. Merriam, 1988; Punch, 1998; Yin, 2003) This research can be described as naturalistic, for no intervention measures are taken to control the research situation, and efforts are simply made to record what happens in the natural setting. Nor does it emphasise the generalisibility of the outcomes of the research. According to the criteria presented by Merriam (1988), it falls into the category of qualitative case study, which is featured as *particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive*, which means that this type of research is based on inductive reasoning, and enables a detailed description of a particular phenomenon, which will bring new meanings to a reader. Case study, in Punch's words, "aims to understand the case in depth, and in its natural setting, recognizing its complexity and its context. ……. aiming to preserve and understand the wholeness and unity of the case." (Punch, 1998: 150)

One of the great strengths of this approach, accordingly, is that it opens the door for a great amount of information, even the details that are subtle and not normally accessible, to be explored in detail. As pointed out by Bromley, it allows researchers to "get as close to the subject of interest as they possibly can, partly by means of direct observation in natural settings, partly by their access to subjective factors (thoughts, feelings, and desires)…" (Quoted from Merriam, 1988:29). It is clear that a great strength of this approach lies in the fact that it allows direct observation of what happens in a natural setting, which is very important for understanding social phenomena like how people interact with an environment or other people in what circumstances, etc. Ideally, direct observation should be employed as one of the major means to collect information about how the student interacts with their new cultural environment. But unfortunately this was not possible, as I was not able to be with the student during their sojourn. So, direct observation is not an option in this case.

However, apart from direct observation, there is a range of other data gathering techniques available for qualitative research, such as interview, questionnaire, diaries, tests, role play, etc. (Wellington, 1996) According to Merriam, "case study does not claim any particular methods for data collection or data analysis. Any and all methods of gathering data from testing to interviewing can be used in a case study, ..." (1988:10) Out of a consideration of a few factors, a decision was made to use a combination of questionnaire and interview as the means to collect data. But before explaining why I decided to use such a combination, and how I used them to achieve my purpose, I would like to discuss briefly the pros and cons of these research methods and the limitations of qualitative case study in general.

The qualitative interview, in Rubin and Rubin's words, "allows us to share the world of others to find out what is going on, why people do what they do, and how they understand their worlds. With such knowledge you can help solve a variety of problems." (1995:5) The chief advantage of the interview method is that it allows one to find out what is not always accessible, such as views, attitudes, feelings, etc. through other means, and it could enable him or her to get deep into an issue to discover unexpected information. However, as the interview data are the outcomes of the interactions between an interviewer and an interviewee, they are inevitably affected by the way/s the two sides of the interview interact with each other and are sensitive to the relationships between the two sides, and thus could be unreliable due to the existence of uncontrolled factors. As summarised by Cohen and colleagues (Cohen and Manion, 1994; Cohen *et al*, 2000), while providing good opportunities for asking questions and probing, the interview method is comparatively low in reliability. Also, the number of respondents an interviewer can reach is limited. In comparison, the questionnaire technique enables a researcher to reach a larger number of people, and, more important to the current research, it can be used without the researcher's presence. The disadvantage of it is that it is less effective in eliciting information compared to the interview, as all the questions have to be preset, and allow little room for details. Its reliability, according to Cohen and colleagues (Ibid.) is fair. In general, as qualitative research is not conducted in an experimental manner, and the subjects of research are mostly social phenomena, often on a small scale, reliability and validity are always issues that need to be addressed carefully (Yin, 2003). I will evaluate how this research was conducted later in this chapter, and now I will return to the discussion of my choice of the research methods.

Firstly, one of the reasons to choose questionnaire and interview as my research tools over other ones is that comparatively both of them allow more flexibility and allow some degree of control. For instance, in comparison with diaries, questionnaires and interviews allow the researcher to set a framework so as to generate information that is more relevant to the purpose of the work. This is also a weakness of these methods, but I will come back to this aspect later. Here I can give an example to illustrate my point. For instance, one of the issues that I intended to look into is the social difficulties caused by communication style differences between cultures, and if I relied on diaries, which are normally much more idiosyncratic and the information generated from them will be varied, I may have more difficulties to get the information I need. It can be argued that if the topic is made explicit to the informant, then the purpose may be achieved, but it could still be more difficult to get the right data. On the other hand, if I chose test or role play as my tools, it would be possible, though not necessarily the case, that less information would be generated due to the needs for greater clarity and formality to structure these research tools.

Secondly, a more important reason for choosing combining the two methods is that they can be complementary to each other in terms of generation of data. The decision to use questionnaire and interview in a combined manner is a solution to overcome difficulties caused by time and space. In this way I was able to monitor progress by collecting information at different points of time of the process, and to purposefully make use of some parts to elicit further information. Thus, not only more information can be gathered, but also that I was able to dig deeper into some issues in order to find the relationships between pieces of information. For instance, monitoring the mood change at different stages of sojourn provided some clues of changes or problems that have occurred to an individual and these clues could be pursued later to find what has happened and why. As the students were away for a year, during this time the questionnaire was the most viable way to gather data from them. However, it would be difficult to get sufficient information only through questionnaire, because it is impossible to ask for clarification or further information as these are difficult to be foreseen at the time when the questionnaires are designed. By nature this type of method does not provide the room for deep investigation. So, questionnaire enabled me to gather some general information, which served as a kind of springboard for further investigation, i.e., interview, where questions were designed to gain deeper

understanding of the situation and thus to explore in greater depth the issues identified at the earlier stage.

5.2. Sampling

Sampling is a key factor of research, which directly affects the outcomes. Often researchers face important decisions about where an investigation is to be conducted and who should be included in it. There are various methods for sampling and the ones that are commonly used in qualitative research are those under the category of non-probability sampling (Cohen and Manion, 1994; Punch, 1998). In contrast to probability sampling, which calls attention to the generalisibility of the results, non-probability sampling is appropriate for research that aims to find out what happens as a social phenomenon and its implications (Merriam, 1988). The method that suits the current research is what is called *convenience sampling*, or *accidental sampling*, which, according to Cohen and Manion, "involves choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing that process until the required sample size has been obtained." (1994:88) According to Punch, whatever the strategies for qualitative sampling, it is important that "[T]he sampling plan and sampling parameters (settings, actors, events, processes) should line up with the purposes and the research questions of the study" (1998:194).

As the purpose of this research is to seek for fuller understanding of the specific context, only the specific group of people involved would be eligible as respondents for the research. One criterion for the selection is a strong preference for work experience during the year abroad. As most of the students were willing and had opportunities to have some work experience of one way or another, this did not prove to be a problem. Participation was on voluntary basis, as I had no financial or other means to encourage participation but relied on the good will of the participants. I explained why I wanted to conduct such a research, and made it clear that I was exploring the possibility of improving the business Chinese language course. As the size of the student population in the department was quite small, 22 students in that year group, and as an optional course, it was not known how many of them would take the course when they returned from Beijing one year later, so the solution was to ask all those who would consider to take the course in the following year to participate in the investigation. There were initially 10 students who stated their interest to participate. But partly due to the

difficulties to operate a research when the researcher could not be present, there were some changes and not everyone went through the entire process, as I shall explain later.

5.3. The Design of the Research Framework

In its present form, the research work can be seen as containing basically two parts: the theoretical basis for the empirical investigation of the IC development; and the field work – the process of gathering and analysing information from the students about their development of the competence, mainly through their sojourn experience. Most of the questions asked are directly referred to their sojourn experience, but not restricted to it, therefore a broad range of information is expected, either from the sojourn experience, or from other sources of experiences such as classroom learning or cross-cultural friendships, etc. The focus of the study is mainly on what the students achieved in terms of IC development at the point when they completed their sojourn. The current scope of quest is considerably narrower than what was planned originally. The initial research design had an ambition to look into the issue of the competence development in a wider perspective by having another two parallel dimensions to it. That is, in addition to the present focus, it was hoped that insights could also be gained in terms of the process of intercultural competence development and in terms of professional perspective on inter- and cross-cultural communication – gathering first-hand information from experienced business professionals rather than from the literature.

In regard to the former, it was hoped that by gathering information at different points of the process of development, i.e., pre-sojourn, during the sojourn at the initial, middle, and later stages, as well as after the sojourn, some useful information might be gained in regard to how the progress takes place and what problems need to be addressed at what stage/s. But this idea was not pursued due to the combination of two reasons. The more direct one is that there was not enough time to prepare for a series of questionnaires or surveys to address the issues to be revealed during the process of data collection, because as a part time researcher I had little time left after work, and to monitor the process of development requires immediate response to address the relevant issues. Then, a concern of whether sufficient information could be collected through this means to serve the purpose was another reason for the abandonment of the plan. The question occurred when I started preparing the questionnaires whether it would be fruitful to search for answers to the issue of progression or the process of development without having the opportunity to observe its happening. The answer seemed to be

positive, but the amount of information needed was much greater than expected originally and was beyond what I could cope with as an individual part-time researcher. Although a lot of information could be gathered through questionnaire, for example, about events, attitudes, emotions, views, knowledge, behavioural tendencies, etc., but this instrument does not allow access to information in a systematic manner unless follow-up means can be used to expand on the information one has got. For the above reasons, the idea of monitoring progress as it was happening was given up.

The plan to collect empirical data from business people who have had some personal experience of cross-cultural business interactions was not carried out purely due to time constraints. The purpose was to get the perspective of business profession in regard to intercultural communication in general, and cross-cultural business communication involving Chinese culture in particular, and use it as a reference for understanding the needs of the learner of a business language course.

Each of the two abandoned sub plans had its own focus, and together they and the present work could have produced more information in regard to the development of the competencies for intercultural communication. But on the other hand, because each of the dimensions has its own separate focus, the present work did not suffer in its completeness when the scope of the research was reduced.

5.4. Data Collection

In the following I will describe how data was collected and some of the problems that occurred during the process of data collection.

5.4.1. Methods of Data Collection

Earlier, I mentioned that both questionnaire and interview were used for the data collection and the reason why I decided to use both. Now I will explain in more detail how they are used in combination. The data were collected in three stages, the first one at the time when the students had been in Beijing for about three months, the second one at about nearly six months later, and the last one at about four months after that. The first two collections were done through questionnaires, where a range of questions were asked about the students' satisfaction with their sojourn experience as well as their understanding of and attitudes towards various cross- and inter-cultural phenomena and issues. The last stage of the data collection was done through interview within the first three weeks after the students started their third year in October 2001, where individuals

were invited to explain and elaborate on some of the views and opinions that they offered earlier in the questionnaires, and to give as well their views on some of the typical Chinese ways of communication and the value orientations. Except the latter aspect, to which everybody was expected to respond, the rest of the questions in the interviews were designed on an individual basis in accordance with each one's responses to the earlier questionnaires, and therefore differ from person to person.

Through questionnaires, information was collected with regard to how the students perceived their new cultural environment, and how they responded to it emotionally and behaviourally, but as said earlier, such a research method does not allow great depth into a complicated issue. To get over this limitation, some of the key issues or important clues identified from the questionnaire investigations were further pursued through the interviews. Such a combination enabled me to explore not only how the students perceived the new cultural environment and the ways they had coped with the changes, but also to some degree how they came to see things the ways they did by examining the social contexts that they were in. Also, as a lot of the questions in the interviews are individually oriented, they could be more effective in generating information than those that were less specific and less context-bound.

In regard to the process of data collection, what actually happened did not precisely follow the original plan, according to which, there should be three consecutive questionnaires instead of two. That is, a questionnaire would be conducted every three months starting from the third month of the students' sojourn till the end of the academic year. One of the reasons for having several questionnaires was to spread the 'workload', because too many questions at one go could be off-putting and would consequently result in poor information. Another consideration was that to have several sessions would allow the questions to be arranged in the way that corresponds with the students' experience, i.e., growing in scope and depth – from the basic everyday encounters to more specific social contexts such as workplace or close relationships and so on; from broad impressions of the people and the society in general to some understanding of the social patterns and values of the culture, etc.

However, a failure to produce the second questionnaire in time resulted in a change of the plan, which means that instead of having three questionnaires, now the second and third questionnaires had to be combined together forming a larger one. As direct observation of the process of individuals' progression was no longer a concern

and it did not matter at what time the data were to be collected, and this change did not have serious impact on the result of the work. However, to reduce two questionnaires into one did mean a struggle to balance between the size of the questionnaire and the coverage of contents.

5.4.2. Pilot Interview

Before starting collecting data, I was uneasy about whether I would be able to gather enough data, especially through interview. I understood that the questionnaire had limitations in generating data, and therefore interviews would be more than useful for further information. However, unlike the questionnaire, the interview is interactive and thus involves more human factors, such as relationships, communication skills, and thus the outcome is less predictable. In this sense, I felt I had little control over the interview in comparison with questionnaire investigation, where the outcome is more directly linked to the way the questionnaire is designed.

To test the water, I had a pilot interview in early 2000. Four students in their third year took part in it on a voluntary basis. It was conducted at the time when I had just begun the process of designing the questionnaires. So, the interviews were not based on previous feedbacks, nor were they focused on any specific issues. The main purpose was for me to find out if much information could be elicited through this means and to gain a confidence in using it. The interviews were thus not very structured, and the respondents were invited to tell freely their experience of living and working in China, each about 30 to 50 minutes. The pilot work was very useful in terms of gaining confidence and managing relationships. I was relieved to find that the students were willing to share their experiences and views with me, and also that their experiences were rich source of information for the investigation. Looking back, as the pilot interviews were done in a condition where there were no pre-elicited information to pursue and I felt no pressure, they were better conducted than the real interviews.

5.4.3. The Design of the Questionnaires

With the purpose to get an overall profile of the students' level of intercultural competence, the questionnaires were set to investigate the students' perceptions of the host culture, the nature of intercultural communication, and their own interactions with their new cultural environment. The idea is that the students' own accounts of the new cultural environment and of how they handled the differences should reveal a lot about

their attitudes towards and understanding of the host culture as well as the nature of intercultural interaction/communication, and their abilities to manage the interactions with the host and/or other cultures. Based on this assumption, much emphasis was laid on the students' own experiences of handling cultural differences, such as level of involvement with and approach to different culture/s. The questions were designed to elicit information about their emotional responses to the new cultural environment, their observations and explanations of the cultural differences, and their relationships and interactions with host members, hoping that together these different aspects would help to build coherent views of the students as individuals in terms of how they dealt with intercultural encounters. For instance, a question on the level of satisfaction with new cultural experiences may throw light on how one manages his/her daily life and interactions in a new environment, which can be better understood in relation to the level of skills and knowledge of the individual in handling intercultural encounters as well as the level of familiarity he/she has with the culture.

Both questionnaires contained these different aspects, but there were some differences in terms of scope and focus (Appendices 1 and 2). The first questionnaire was comparatively simpler and narrower in scope, with the emphasis mainly on the development of the students in terms of awareness of the differences between intra- and inter-cultural communication and their efforts to adapt to the change of cultural environment. At the time when the questionnaire survey was conducted, the students had been in China for only about three months and therefore it was expected that their contact with the host culture was relatively limited, as was their understanding of it. Thus instead of seeking for detailed accounts or explanations of the differences between the cultures, the focus was on the issue of their awareness of the nature of intercultural communication, their awareness of the differences between their home and the host cultures in regard to social structure, social behaviour, and meaning system, and their self awareness. For instance, they were invited to give examples of the social behaviours and social institutions that they found interesting, strange, or simply different from their own as well as how they think they would be like in the eyes of host members. Another issue that was looked into was their psychological and behavioural adaptations, such as coping with culture shock and managing relationships and social interactions with host members, which are some of the challenges that one would encounter especially at the early stage of sojourn. To learn whether they had developed flexibility and sensitivity to a different cultural environment, questions were asked not

only about what they perceived to be important for successful sojourning, but also how they saw their own interactions with their Chinese interactants.

The second questionnaire is more comprehensive than the first one both in terms of scope and intensity. For the former, apart from development of culture awareness and competencies in managing anxiety, ambiguity, relationships, and interactions in a new cultural environment, the main concerns of the first questionnaire, another two issues were also addressed: cross-cultural workplace behaviours and communication styles. By then the students had been more widely exposed to the host culture and had more extensive contact with its members, and as mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, almost all of them had some work experience of one way or another in Beijing, thus a lot of attention was focused on gaining insights into their understanding of the host culture and the impact of the differences on communication, especially in the workplace. As for the latter aspect, the second questionnaire addressed in greater depth the issue of the development in cultural awareness and cultural understanding. Evidence was sought for more comprehensive understanding of the host culture as well as of the nature of intercultural communication. For example, in regard to development of cultural awareness, attention was paid more to whether the respondents were aware of the causes of the differences between them and host members in behaviour and thinking rather than simply recognition and acceptance of the differences.

The design of the questionnaires is guided by the various theoretical and empirical issues discussed in the earlier chapters regarding intercultural behaviour and intercultural education. As the first stage of the investigation focuses mostly on the impact of the new cultural environment on cognition and behavioural adaptation, the first questionnaire draws heavily on studies on intercultural behaviour and adjustment, such as culture shock, relationships between knowledge, emotion, and behaviour. For instance, the postulation of the interrelation of cognition, affect and behaviour (Brislin, Landis, and Brandt, 1983), the role of social network in making intercultural adjustment (Bochner, 1982), the proposed commonalities in people's cross-cultural experience (Brislin, 1993), and the concept of uncertainty and anxiety management (Gudykunst, 1995) provide the theoretical tools to look closely into some key issues of intercultural cognition and interaction such as perceived differences in roles and social norms, self awareness and expectations of others, level of anxiety and management of dysfunctions, and so on. A clear attempt is made to address the issue of relationship management, and some tentative effort is also made to explore the issue of behavioural patterns.

As the investigation increases in scope and intensity, the theoretical framework for the second questionnaire is broadened to include more explicitly issues in relation to communication styles, value dimensions, cultural identity, and work-related behaviours. Cultural awareness is still at the centre of the investigation, and more attention is paid to the informants' perceptions of intercultural interactions. The questions were formed around different concepts, which are interrelated and interdependent, reflecting the different intercultural issues involved in this study. The conceptual framework that underlies the questions on cross-cultural understanding, which make up a significant part of the second questionnaire, can be seen as formed largely of the following hypotheses and constructs: high-context and low-context communication (Hall, 1976); the four cultural variability dimensions (Hofstede, 1980) plus the long-short term orientation or what is called Confucian dynamism dimension (Hofstede; Hofstede and Bond, 1988); direct and indirect communication styles (e.g. Hara and Kim, 2004; Ting-Toomey, 1988, 1999); and face work (Ting-Toomey, 1988). As the discussion in Chapter 2 shows, cultures differ, sometimes significantly, on these value orientations and social dimensions, and the differences have profound influence on the ways of thinking and behaving. For example, some empirical research suggests that face work and *guanxi* are distinctive features of the way social and business interactions are conducted in China (e.g. Sergeant and Frenkel, 1998; Wong and Slater, 2002), and these behavioural characteristics are thought to be related to the value orientation towards collectivism (Ting-Toomey, 1988).

Other theoretical studies and constructs that are drawn to support the conceptual framework of the second questionnaire, apart from those applied in the first one, include mainly cultural identity theory (e.g., Tajfel, 1978; Turner, 1982), the structure and development of intercultural competence (e.g., Byram, 1997; Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey, 1988; Spitzberg and Cupach, 1984), and language and pragmatics (e.g., Gumperz, 1982;Young, 1994).

Having presented the relationship between the two questionnaires and what each of them is designed for, I turn now to the methodological issues concerning the design of the questionnaires. First of all, clarity and unambiguity are thought to be the essential qualities of a good questionnaire, as it is paramount that all questions be understood clearly and accurately by respondents (Cohen and Manion, 1994; Wellington, 1996). In accordance with the advice given (e.g. Cohen *et al*, 2000, Wellington, 1996; Yin, 2003), I paid attention to the wording as well as the structure of the questions. With regard to

wording, I tried to avoid using ambiguous words. Also, I avoided using jargon as the students might not have the same level of exposure as I did to the literature relevant to this study, and therefore might not understand them in the same way. As for structure, I tried to keep the questions simple and clear by avoiding complex sentences seeking for more than one answer or with multilayer of meanings, such as so called 'double-barrelled questions', two-in-one questions', 'double-question questions', etc. (Wellington, 1996). When revising the first draft I was advised to split the complex questions each into several simple ones and to use sub-categories to keep together under one unit different aspects of a same issue. The questionnaires were tried out before being administered with some friends and student volunteers who were not in the same year group of the respondents. Due to these measures, as far as I am aware, there did not occur any serious problems of confusion or misunderstanding.

Another issue concerning data collection is that the researcher should be careful not to influence the views and decisions of the respondent, avoiding leading questions and restrictive questions (Cohen and Manion, 1994; Wellington, 1996). Leading questions are defined as "questions with a position statement" and restrictive question "questions which inherently eliminate some options". Being aware of the danger of using terms and expressions that contains the researcher's own bias or indeed their professional bias, I tried to eliminate all the words that might lead to biased views or could be interpreted as holding certain attitudes or views. For similar reasons, caution was also taken to prevent respondents' views and opinions on some questions being affected by formulations in other questions. In designing the questions I found it necessary sometimes to rephrase or delete some questions that might be taken as reference for other questions. I also found it necessary sometimes to scatter some questions so as to avoid associations between questions or simply to elicit fresh information. These measures were intended to reduce the chance of affecting the investigation with bias.

The next issue that concerns the questionnaire design is measures to engage the interest of respondents. It is little secret that long and very demanding questionnaires could be off-putting, and so are uninteresting. In the questionnaire design I tried to address this problem both in terms of balancing different types of questions and the format. Cohen and Manion (1994) suggest that open-ended questions should be avoided in questionnaires, and one of the reasons is that they are very demanding of the respondent's time. With this advice in mind, I tried not to 'overload' the questionnaires,

and adopted a mixture of structured questions and open-ended questions in both of the questionnaires. This balances the need to increase the appeal of the questionnaire and the need to obtain necessary information.

To be more precise, the first questionnaire contains more open-ended questions, and the second one has significantly fewer. This is because the first one focuses much on the individuals' response to the new environment, thus more description is required, and also it is less heavily loaded in terms of content than the second one. In contrast, the second questionnaire, as a reduced form of two questionnaires, as I mentioned earlier, is more compact and complex. But a large proportion of it acts as a checklist, thus it is both necessary and possible to reduce open-ended questions to a minimum, with some as optional questions in combination with multiple choice questions. Thus most of the questions can be answered by selecting one of the few choices provided.

Even though the questions are set in a less demanding form, the comparatively wide range in number and content may still make the questionnaire look unattractively long. One cosmetic solution is to make it appear organised and easier to follow (Cohen and Manion, 1994), so I grouped the questions into three sections under different themes, each having its own number system. The themes of the sections can be roughly defined as affective and cognitive responses to the cross-cultural experience, understanding of cross-cultural workplace, and understanding of cross-cultural and intercultural communication (with some questions for background information, which help to define contexts), though the dividing lines between them are not always very strict. I hoped this would create a sense that the questionnaire is structured and the work is treated seriously.

5.4.4. Conducting Interviews

The interview approach can be categorised as semi-structured interview, which is described as being "guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, but neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time." (Merriam, 1988:74) Highly structured interviews at one end do not allow much flexibility and variation (Punch, 1998), while unstructured interviews at the other end do not leave the interviewer much control over the directions of an interview conversation, as it is not based on predetermined questions. As a follow-up means to probe deeper into the respondents' perspectives, the semi-structured interview allowed me both the flexibility that I needed and the structure to guide the conversation. That is to say, while I could

use the data gained previously purposefully to get the information needed, I also had the convenience of adjusting the focus of a conversation when it necessary.

Most of the questions for the interviews, as explained already, are formed on the basis of the students' previous responses, with the aim to seek clarification or explanations of their views or events, thus individually oriented. For example, a respondent said in the questionnaire that cultural difference caused some problems in his workplace. In order to understand why he thought it was so, and how he perceived the cultural differences, he was asked to elaborate on his views with examples. This enabled a better view of his perspective. However, there were also some standard questions for all the respondents about their views on what was necessary for working successfully across cultures. The purpose of asking these questions was to get an idea about whether as a consequence of their sojourn, the group of students gained an awareness and understanding of some prominent features of the way Chinese people interact, and what is the significance of this to an outsider in their view.

Furthermore, the outcomes of an interview are affected by its social interactive nature. Dexter suggests that the nature of interview interactions is determined by three variables, the interviewer, the interviewee, and the definition by both of the situation (Quoted in Merriam, 1988). This interpersonal dimension means that relationship and motions have to be carefully managed. Some researchers with a feminist perspective emphasise that creating equal status and trust between interviewer and interviewee enables greater openness and rich data. (Punch, 1998) Realising the impact of human factors on interviews, I became aware of the social context of the interviews and my own conduct and was thus able to take some actions to prevent or reduce the negative impact on the interview outcomes.

For example, I was aware that the dual role of the teacher and the researcher could affect the behaviours of the respondents, for the relationship of the teacher and the student might overshadow the relationship of the researcher and the respondent. The position of the teacher may make the student feel uncomfortable to express their views openly, especially negative views if they believe that they would offend the teacher. In addition, the interview encounter was made more complicated by the issues of cultural identity and self identification. My Chinese cultural background means that behaviours on both sides could be affected due to identity related issues. On their part, if I were perceived as not open or culturally biased, they might not let me know their true

feelings or opinions, especially if they had less positive views about some aspects of Chinese culture. While on the other side of the coin, if I was unaware of such issues, I would not be able to act cautiously and might ask questions that would not be seen as sensible. It is not possible to change the relationships, but it is possible to take actions to shape the contexts where relations function. By adapting my behaviours I was able to create the atmosphere where it is easier for both sides to assume their roles as the researcher and the respondent rather than the teacher and the student, and to be relaxed about their identities, although it is difficult to drive the teacher-student relationship completely out of the scene.

The message that I tried to send to the respondents through my behaviours was that I was genuinely interested in their experiences and views and would listen carefully to what they would say instead of seeking for what I wanted to hear. To ensure that the role of the researcher rather than that of the teacher was enacted in the interviews, I tried to be sensitive to their feelings and to encourage them to feel free to talk by listening attentively and acting sensibly and friendlily. I found it a challenge when some of the respondents asked my opinions on the issues under discussion, because I didn't want to give the impression that I was not willing to share my views with them, but at the same time I was keenly aware that if I was not careful my bias might affect their responses.

Another issue that I encountered in the interview is what language to use. In pilot interviews, three out of the four students who took part in it chose to use English as the medium for the interview and one chose to use Chinese. What I learnt from the pilot work was that although students enjoyed having opportunities to use their Chinese, yet due to the depth of the conversations, most of them would have some problems to express themselves as freely and accurately as they would like. This would have some negative effect on data collection, and may as well make some students uncomfortable. Conversely, using English to conduct interviews I would have linguistic problems instead, which again would affect data collection. But taking into consideration that I could prepare the interview questions before hand, and that the students were expected to do most of the talking, and moreover, with the language they are familiar with, the students could feel more in control of the situation, thus more confident in the interview, I decided that the advantages of using English outweighed the disadvantages, and thus took this option. Although I did encounter problems in terms of tracing some useful leads and making myself clear sometimes, the result was overall satisfactory.

5.4.5. Participants, Participation, and Data

The size of my data set, as shown in the figure given at the end of this section, is comparatively small, but it took almost a year to complete due to the way it was collected, i.e., through two consecutive questionnaires and an interview with an interval between each of them. The number of participants for each stage of the investigation is different, and also the participants were not all the same ones. This, as I mentioned earlier, is partly due to difficulties to operate the investigations without being able to be present, and partly due to what is common to all informant-based investigations: the availability and level of commitment of respondents. Originally, there were 10 students who indicated their interest in participating in the investigation. Before they left for China, I had a meeting with many of them, when I explained briefly the research project and how the investigation was going to be conducted. One of them kindly agreed to take the responsibility to distribute and collect the questionnaires for me. But when conducting the first questionnaire, things didn't go exactly the way as planned. In short, the questionnaire papers were not passed to the person who was supposed to be in charge, and instead they were distributed by a teacher who was not fully aware of the situation. Although there were eleven people who completed the questionnaire (22 copies were sent), more than I expected, nonetheless, some of those who were among the original group did not participate.

Realising that this mistake posed a threat to the trust and relationship between the researcher and the respondents, I took actions immediately to resolve it. The original arrangement was restored, and the second questionnaire was distributed and collected by the student in charge. There were seven returns (20 copies were sent), fewer than the first one, but that was within expectation. There could be many reasons for the lower rate of return, but it is important to understand that by then the students were much busier than the early stage of their sojourn and were preoccupied with many other things. Also, as I understand it, many of them attended different classes and had different timetables, and therefore doing the organisation was not very easy.

Due to the way the research is designed, I had to ask the respondents to write their names on the questionnaires so that I could have questions relevant to each individual later on in the interview. As shown by the names, there are only two students who clearly took part in both of the surveys. There is an unnamed copy in each of the surveys, so it is not clear whether there is another one who also took both. Ideally, I

would have liked to see all the respondents complete the three-stage investigation, but since the main issues in the first questionnaire are also covered in the second, it doesn't matter too much if a respondent participated only the second questionnaire. As too few people did both, I decided to invite all the six who were known to have taken part in the second questionnaire for interview. In the end, due to time clash, I only managed to have five interviews. Statistically, the scale of the investigation is very small, but the data generated are rich. Retrospectively, if the mistake had not been made, there might have been a small difference, i.e., there might be more people who had done both questionnaires, though the total number of participation would have not been greater.

Record of Data Collection

Event	Time	Place	No. of Copies (Candidates)*	No. of Returns (Candidates)	Attendance Rate
Questionnaire I	Dec 2000	Beijing	22	11	50%
Questionnaire II	June 2001	Beijing	20	7	35%
Interview	Oct-Nov 2001	Durham	6	5	83%

*Note: The Number of expected attendance for both questionnaire surveys was around 10.

In conclusion of this account of the design of the research and the actual process of data collection, it is evident that research in reality does not correspond to the ideals presented in many research methods books, and I thought it important to make this clear so that the nature of my own research is evident and so that other researchers might profit from my experience. In the following section I have also described the analysis in detail for the same reasons.

5.5. The Process of Data Analysis

Dealing with data and making sense of them proved to be not only time-consuming but also the most difficult part of the research project. Due to various reasons, including pressure from work and personal reasons, it took me very long time to complete this work. I will discuss in the following the process of data analysis: how the data were managed, what problems I encountered, and the approach that I took to analyse the data.

Due to the way the data were collected, data analysis was a part of the data collection process in this study, and therefore it started while the data collection was going on. The whole process can be roughly divided into three stages: the initial stage of searching for clues and leads, the second stage of highlighting and categorising all

the data, and the final stage of linking all the information together to form a coherent and complete understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. At the first stage, all the questionnaire answers were looked into and the information was sorted roughly in two ways. Firstly, a comparative analysis was applied so that regularities or irregularities could be spotted. This would help to identify issues that it was worth paying attention to. For instance, if there were different views about whether extra effort is required to interact/communicate cross-culturally, then it is worthwhile to look further into the arguments from each perspective. Secondly, close attention was paid to the comments and descriptions from those individuals who were going to be interviewed. This would help me to identify the information that could lead to further understanding of these individuals in regard to how they managed issues such as intercultural adaptation, intercultural communication, etc. So, the selected information was used for designing individually based interview questions. This part of the analysis was much easier than the second stage, as the data from the questionnaires were already classified in a way, and problems were approached on a case to case basis.

The second stage not only took a very long time but also involved a lot of hard work, laborious coding, painstaking categorising, frantic search for links and relations between different pieces of information, and desperate effort to find meanings hidden behind the data. The first step was to transcribe the five interview cassette tapes, each about an hour long. Although transcribing is a relatively easier task, and the amount of work does not seem to be great, it nevertheless took me very long time to complete it. For my purpose, there is no need to transcribe the data phonetically, so what I did was to try to keep the style of the talk.

The coding process that followed proved to be much more demanding. The first thing that I did was to identify the key words and phrases that were deemed central for organising the data or as significant evidence for understanding the respondents' perspectives. This was guided predominantly by the theoretic framework that had been established earlier. In accordance with the relevant theoretic constructs, the data were first selected, and then categorised under different conceptual labels, such as managing conflict, coping with culture shock, direct vs. indirect talk, etc. and comments and notes were added to the categories when they were transferred to a new document. As the size of the data set is not great, I chose to do the initial coding manually, and like many researchers I used coloured pens to highlight the key elements in the documents before transferring them to a new document. The original documents of the first and second

questionnaires were numbered into two separate series, and the interview transcriptions were also labelled alphabetically so that they could be traced more easily.

The whole process of classifying and analysing the data was a process of linking the data to the conceptual ideas that I was trying to apply and test in this case. As the analysis is theory-driven rather than data-driven (Wolcott, 1994), that is, a theoretic framework is used to guide the analysis rather than to make new discovery of patterns or theoretic explanations of a phenomenon from data themselves, the extent that I can understand and bring meanings out of the data depends on the clarity of the theoretic framework and my familiarity with the theories concerned. Partly due to an initial lack of thorough grasp of the theoretic framework, it took me a long time to be able to synthesise the different categories of information and to see beyond the data themselves.

Several attempts were made. First, I tried to compare individual differences in each of the categories with the intention of gaining an understanding of the level of development in different aspects. But this was not very productive as I lacked the means to interpret and link them into a coherent unity. One of the reasons was that this approach did not provide much contextual information needed for understanding the comments and behaviours of the individuals. Also, the categories that had been created from the data were not substantial enough to allow a complete view of different aspects of IC competence. Furthermore, the relationships between the categories were not all clearly defined. Apart from these, there were other problems, which I discuss below.

My next attempt was to look more deeply into each individual's case instead of focusing on the selected themes only. This meant that apart from the categorised information it was necessary for me to go back to the original data to retrieve some contextual information and to piece them all together. Meanwhile, I found it necessary to refine the way the data were categorised in order to clarify the relationships between the categories. Inspired by the idea of thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998), which is an analytical approach that is more typically used for deriving patterns or finding emerging theories in qualitative data analysis, I examined more closely how the different categories related to each other by identifying the main categories (themes) and the related sub-categories (sub-themes), and built a clearer perceptual structure. In my case, instead of deriving themes or patterns from analysing data, I simply introduced a system of order to the data through sorting out the relationships among the different perceptual structures I used. These improvements enabled me to gain better insights into the data,

but there were more problems to overcome. One was competence evaluation, the main objective of this study, and the other how to present the evidence gathered to others in a structured and coherent manner.

The third stage of data analysis only started when I finally managed to sharpen my analytic tools, i.e., find solutions to the above two problems, which are related. In regard to the issue of evaluation, there were two aspects that I had to address. One was that I had already identified the models as my assessment tools, but was under a wrong impression that what was needed mostly was to find a fit between the data and the criteria. Therefore when I tried to apply the criteria to the data, I found it difficult to get deep into them and to make clear explanation of what is presented by the respondents. This is partly related to the other issue – how to present qualitative data, and partly due to my initial lack of thorough understanding of the models. It was not until when I had more clear understanding of the models and could identify clearly connections between them that I began to realise the richness of the data. What I think very useful is that through this process of coming to grips with the problem of how to combine the models I was able to see more clearly of the issue of intercultural competence assessment.

The second issue – to synthesise and transform what has been derived from the data analysis into coherent, credible, and easily understandable descriptions – concerns the issue of how to present your research findings to others. Wolcott (1994) suggests that to be able to produce a clear and coherent presentation of all your evidence, it is necessary to have a focus, around which you carefully knit your evidence together. The idea of 'storyline' inspired me. Although the main themes that run through my accounts of the cases may not be described exactly as storyline, nonetheless there is a thread that holds all ideas and events together. The use of the term 'storyline' betrayed Wolcott's favour of descriptive approach. He maintains that as qualitative research is very much context-bound, it is important that the reader is able to see what the researcher sees and can feel what the researcher feels. He further suggests that since qualitative research is subjective, the researcher needs to avoid over-interpreting the data and should allow the reader to reach their own views or conclusions. Like others (e.g. Merriam, 1988), he proposed that description should account for over 60 per cent of a case report. What I can say is that my final analysis, which is to be presented in the next chapter, is guided by this advice and suggestions, and I tried to make clear and substantial presentations of the views of the informants and the context of the events, hoping that the reader can find the informants' voice from the presentations.

5.6. Validity, Reliability, and Ethics

As shown in the above discussion, in this research care was exercised to avoid bias influence, being judgemental, and distortion of the reality. For instance, in both the questionnaire design and the interviews, I was very careful not to ask leading questions or to allow my own and professional bias to affect the outcomes of the research. In conducting the interviews, both caution and measures were taken so that it was possible for the respondents to talk openly and frankly about their views and opinions without worrying about being judged. At the same time, no pressure was exercised, and all the information was given voluntarily. Similarly, no sensitive or improper questions were asked. Although it is possible that the respondents wouldn't tell me those that in their view I would be displeased to hear, as the power balance was tilted towards the teacher-researcher, yet they were not only encouraged to say what they wanted to say, but also did tell me their frustrations caused by cultural differences. In fact, I think, my inadequacy in English, which was the consequence of inexperience in managing recording, reading notes, listening and asking questions at the same time, to some extent redressed the power balance, and the teacher role further faded into the background when they were trying to help me to keep the conversation going smoothly. In regard to data collection, the validity and reliability were achieved partly through a combination of different data collection methods, partly through a good level of consistency of the data collected at different points of time. The accidental change of survey participants and the subsequent selection of interviewees add to the validity and reliability of data collection, as the data remain consistent when the situation changed.

One important aspect of reliability in case studies is to be able to produce clear evidence of how the research is conducted, and in this respect Yin (2003) suggests that three principles should be followed: multiple sources of evidence, case study data base, and chain of evidence. As I have shown, both questionnaire and interview were used for data collection. Due to the difference between the two kinds of data - survey data tends to be less subjective but lacks depth, while interview data are just the opposite – this combination should increase both the validity and the reliability. Then, a consistency and continuity can be found about some issues in the data that were collected at different time and through different means, for instance, the correlation between the level of involvement in social interactions with host members and level of satisfaction. Also, evidence of consistency can be seen from data, where if one read carefully, he or she could find indications in the interview conversations about the continuity of the data

collection. Furthermore, the validity and reliability are strengthened by the fact that participation was not controlled by the researcher so that the possibility of biased selection can be eliminated. Finally, as my early account shows, a data base was created in the process of research, and the process can be traced easily.

With regard to data analysis, I was quite aware of the fact that my personal and professional bias would affect the selection and interpretation of the data. Given that bias is a universal phenomenon, what it is important then is to reduce the influence of the bias. I thus tried to keep an open-mind and be non-judgemental in dealing with the data, and more importantly, I made efforts to present events or views with reference to their context. Although I am not sure I was able to move the respondents to the front stage to represent themselves, I tried to make it clear to the reader why they did/said what they did/said. Regarding the theoretical instruments that I used, applying and combining two models in analysing the data helped to reduce theoretical bias, and thus strengthening the validity of the findings.

Apart from these, there are ethical issues that were also addressed. First, I informed the participants about the purpose of this work. Since the original aim was to improve my course I asked for voluntary participants mainly from those who might be interested in taking the course. As I explained above, due to unexpected occurrence many different people took the first questionnaire. Some of them did not attend the meeting that I had with the volunteers, but most of them knew the purpose of the work. Although I was not able to share the result of the work with them as it took a long time to complete, I did nevertheless address in the class with them some of the issues that I identified from the investigations. Second, as keeping names of the respondents was necessary for me to sort my data, all the participants were asked to give their names during the investigation. I gave them my promise that I would not reveal their identities in my writing, and codes are used in this work to identity the different participants. Third, consent forms were used, but only with those who participated in the second questionnaire and the interview. I am very grateful to all the participants, without their help it is not possible to conduct this work. I stated my gratitude both orally and sent them my Christmas greeting while they were in China.

Looking back, I made some errors both in interview and data management. In doing the interviews, I forgot to record the time of the interview, sometimes the names of the interviewees. Luckily, as I was familiar with them, there were no disasters. I also

had problems with classification and storing of data, and found myself doing repetitive work, but in the next chapter I will present the data analysis which was the final product of this learning process.

Chapter Six

Data Analysis – Individual Profiles

Having reviewed some theories and research on intercultural communication and interaction, intercultural communicative competence development and assessment, and then established a framework for carrying out assessment, I can finally come to present the data and interpret what they say. I will present in this chapter in detail the data from five interviews with the related questionnaires case by case so that it is easier to see how these individuals managed their interactions with their new cultural environment and how the environment affected their responses, as well as how they perceived the host culture and their own interactions with it. As the data reveal, the five interviewees to different degrees had quite extensive experience of interacting with host members and consequently gained significant insights into Chinese culture.

In analysing the data I will assess the nature of the intercultural competence each achieved and relate it to the analysis of ethnorelativity presented in earlier chapters. The overall purpose of this chapter is therefore to address one of the main foci of the thesis: the issue of assessment of intercultural competence.

In the following some of the quotations are in italics for the purpose of accentuation. Italics are also used for transliteration.

Individual Profile - Informant A

Informant A took part in the second questionnaire and the interview investigations, and in both he appeared to be very positive about his sojourn and work experience in China. He said that his work experience enabled him to gain "contacts, valuable lessons, experience to draw upon in the future" (QII-No.4). As we are going to see, he made a lot of efforts to socialize with host members and to learn the host culture. He managed to establish good relationships with his Chinese colleagues, and through interactions with them and observation, he gained some good insights into the host culture, especially in regard to communication styles, and how work could be affected by cultural differences. In the following, some quotations are in italics to accentuate for the purpose of emphasising.

First of all, according to the data, Informant A actively engaged in socializing with his Chinese colleagues. The cultural environment of the workplace was mixed, where more than 50% of the staff was Chinese. As will become evident through the

discussion, he interacted with his Chinese colleagues both in and outside office. He discussed work with them during office time and went out for fun sometimes after work. Although he admitted that misunderstanding sometimes occurred due to cultural differences, and found it quite frustrating to communicate sometimes because of communication style differences, he was nevertheless satisfied that he met their expectations and claimed proudly that he was able to win their trust and respect. This was because, as he explained, he was careful to respect their cultural traditions and socialized with them in their style (QII-No.4), by which he meant interacting with them in accordance with the social norms that they practiced, and tried to speak Chinese with them. Here is an example of what he meant by socializing in 'their' style:

> ...in Beijing, we'd often go to a *Jiu Ba Jie* (a street where there are a lot of pubs and bars, which are popular for foreign visitors and expatriates) with our friends, English people, and we would often just talk...among English people. I think… if I went out with the people from work, I'd maybe make them...they would decide where to meet. Maybe *Jiu Ba Jie*, maybe... it would be somewhere else. ...Um...I'd try and talk in Chinese with them instead of English, because though they wanted to speak English as well, but it is easier in Chinese. ...They would take me for dinner, say, *qing wo chi fang* (treat me to dinner), then I'd try to repay that in the evening. (InterviewNote-1:1)

This account demonstrates clearly his interest in socializing with host members, and also his readiness to take some adaptive actions, as he was consciously trying to do things in 'their style', or to be considerate. One example of difference between 'their style' and his own style is that: "*If we go out for dinner in England, I wouldn't say I'll pay this time, and you pay next time. Normally we just... AA zhi (go-Dutch)*" (InterviewNote-1:2). Here he showed an understanding of a tradition of the host culture, wherein people normally take turns to settle the bill instead of go-Dutch. To adapt to his new social environment he showed respect to the tradition and made sure to take his turn to treat his Chinese colleagues, in his words, "repay their kindness" (InterviewNote-1:1). This indicates clearly his awareness of the importance of showing respect to others and his understanding of the behavioural difference. Also, from his words that it would be easier for his Chinese colleagues if Chinese was used in conversation, it can be felt that he was careful in establishing rapport with them.

In terms of ICC development, it can be seen here some evidence of *savoir être*, *savoirs*, and *savoir apprendre/faire*, as he was not only willing but also able to engage with otherness and to take actions to fit in with the given situation. The following discussion will further demonstrate his willingness, and perceptual as well as behavioural readiness to understand and to accommodate cultural differences. I will first

show some evidence of his cognitive understanding of managing misunderstandings and dysfunctions, and then give examples of the effort that he made in terms of making behavioural adjustments.

Firstly, he put a lot of emphasis on the importance of being patient, polite, and mindful, and stated explicitly that it is necessary to have clear understanding of others' meanings as well as being well understood. For instance, he stated clearly in the questionnaire that the essential qualities to work successfully in China were "patience, listening skills, the effort to try and understand." (QII-No.4) Similarly, in referring to his interactions with his Chinese colleagues, he said in the interview: "because my Chinese was not brilliant, and their English wasn't brilliant, *you got to make sure that what you were asking them, they understood perfectly*" and "*what they were asking you, you understood as well*" (InterviewNote-1:5). He said that he tried to exercise patience and politeness and to make sure that the messages which he sent were clear to his interlocutors, and explained how: "... patience, and... and really asking the question properly. Rather than saying 'Can you do this?', then you say 'CAN-YOU-DO-THIS?' and explain what they need to do, so... you both understand what you were asking." (InterviewNote-1:5)

Emphasis on patience and on cultural understanding can be further seen from his example of different ways of doing business, about which he said: "in England you just speak over the phone and that's all", but in China, you have to first "win their trust, and build *guanxi*" (InterviewNote-1:8), and this obviously takes time. But he emphasised that "*it has to work at Chinese pace. Not that it is slow, but you have to do things differently.*" (InterviewNote-1:8) Again, it shows his awareness of some sources of misunderstanding and dysfunctions, as he was trying to explain how and why things are done differently and their impact on cross-cultural business interactions. His comments suggest that he was taking into account different perspectives in understanding the world reality, and was aware of the fact that different cultural concepts, such as *guanxi* have a lot of impact on cross-cultural social interactions. Here he was able to interpret the social phenomenon of using *guanxi* from different cultural frames of reference, and instead of viewing it to be a slow and inefficient way of doing business, which might be the normal interpretation from the perspective of his own cultural framework he accepted it to be simply a different way of doing things. Here in terms of *savoirs*, he was able to identify some dysfunctions of communication and had some ideas of how to deal with them. He also gained good insights into the host culture, understanding some

different perceptions and behaviours. In terms of *savoir être*, he was clearly willing to participate in social interactions and to engage with otherness, and showed a readiness to take adaptive actions.

Secondly, apart from the needs for patience and listening skills, he also indicated that one has to be prepared to be open and flexible as there are often no clear rules to follow in regard to what is appropriate to do, and therefore what to expect in cross-cultural communication. He said: "*you would be asked about a lot of questions about yourself, about your personal life.... You just have to be prepared to be open*" while at the same time it is also possible that "*if you ask the same question back, you'd embarrass you Chinese friends.*" (InterviewNote-1:12) This, indeed, is very confusing. When people from different cultures interact with each other they each may have different stereotypes of, and hence different expectations of the other. This example indicates that he was quite aware of the differences between intra- and inter-cultural communication and was prepared to be mindful and flexible. This on the other hand suggests that an increase in cultural awareness could lead to greater openness in attitude and flexibility in behaviour. The discussion shows so far that the abilities of practising patience, listening skills, and being open and flexible were recognised by the informant to be very important skills for managing interactions between members of different cultures.

Perhaps it is useful to reflect briefly at this point on what was said in Chapter 4 (4.5.2.) about the criteria for assessing the data. One thing that I argued was the need for clear specifications of the attitudes and skills required to engage in mediations with otherness at different stages of adaptation. Here what are identified as necessary by the informant include the attitudes and skills to be open, respectful, patient and flexible. No doubt, these are essential qualities for successful interactions between individuals with different cultural backgrounds though they do not necessarily imply active engagement, so they may not serve as clear indicators of higher level/s of intercultural competence development. The point is, these basic qualities of intercultural competence are assumed rather than explicitly presented in the ICC model. In the model of intercultural sensitivity development, respect for otherness is emphasised as the core of ethnorelativism, yet the issue is not addressed specifically from the perspective of operation of assessment, so again there is a lack of explicitness in the criterion. For my purpose, it is necessary to be explicit, and as far as I am concerned, the attitudes and

ability to be patient, respectful, open and flexible, tolerant for ambiguity, and to listen to others are clear indications of acceptance of otherness.

Apart from the evidence for perceptual awareness, the data also reveals his effort in adapting to his new cultural environment. For instance, the following example demonstrates how he managed to win the trust of his Chinese interlocutors:

> … They would ask you a lot of questions, and you have to prepare for them to laugh at you. Like if you try to speak Chinese with them, sometimes they think it is hilarious, and laugh at you, which you might feel quite hurtful or embarrassing. ... I think that built trust... with them. (InterviewNote-1:12)

Here it reveals the effort that he made in managing relationships, trying to convey his sincerity and openness. There is further evidence of his effort from the following description of the way he socialised with his Chinese colleagues: "I think I'd just make sure that there weren't too many English people there. I was trying to do it, say... *so that they were the majority, so they would feel more comfortable with that. That's how I would socialise with them... not to arrange to meet my friends, maybe later, but to spend the whole evening with them."* (InterviewNote-1:1)

Further evidence of his preparedness to accommodate differences can be seen from his account of an uncomfortable situation he experienced with some of his Chinese students:

> … I went to China before...the first time I was quite shocked at that they were so inquisitive, and it's quite tiring as well. My students would come up to my house to ask me thirty questions…eh...it was quite tiring.... They would ask me the kind of job in England, how much you earn…um... you know, that's a strange thing to answer. Or how much you father earns a year, and then they would comp... translate this into Chinese money, and say: Oh, you got so much money. That's quite... things like that were quite embarrassing. (InterviewNote-1:13)

Here he described how and why he felt uncomfortable about the conversations he had with his Chinese students. But he showed clearly a willingness to look at the situation from a different perspective when he said: "All these they found shocking.... As far as the university is concerned, it is two different worlds, and *I can understand why* they want to know..." (InterviewNote-1:14). Because of this understanding he was prepared to be open and flexible in dealing with 'improper questions', what are supposedly to be private matters in accordance with his cultural standards, such as family income, girlfriend, etc.

The above examples show some evidence of his taking measures to prevent social dysfunctions and his willingness to understand the other's situations. He explained how

he would react himself in the above mentioned situations by saying: "They would ask me about personal questions, or things about…um…you know, English people, where I asked them questions about China or the culture, because *I didn't feel they could be totally open about themselves*." Here he is seen to be very careful not to cause offence or discomfort to his Chinese interlocutors and was making an effort to avoid communication breakdown. What he said about their lack of total openness suggests that he was aware of some behavioural difference. Here apart from a clear willingness to tolerate difference he also demonstrated awareness of and skills in handling the difference. It seems that further development may require better understanding of the perspectives of his interlocutors in regard to why there is a difference or feeling of difference in terms of openness. It seems that further development could be made in *savoirs, savoir comprendre*, and *savoir apprendre/faire*. In accordance with the criterion of intercultural sensitivity development, there is no clear evidence yet of shifting of frame of reference, and the measures seem to be more oriented towards *acceptance* rather than *adaptation*.

In regard to understanding of different perspectives and the ability to relate observable social phenomena to their corresponding value basis, the data present a more complicated picture. On the one hand he was very much interested in learning the host culture and was able to identify some important differences between his own culture and Chinese culture, but on the other hand, he experience some difficulties in resolving communication difficulties satisfactorily with his Chinese colleagues. The example below shows his observation of and views on different ways of managing conflicts in his workplace.

According to him, when her subordinates failed to provide the information she asked for by the deadline, the editor, an Australian woman, would shout at them in front of everyone, which, as pointed out by the informant, although it was by no means a pleasant way of dealing with problems in any circumstances, was particularly hard for his Chinese colleagues to accept due to the concept of *face* in Chinese culture. As he put it: "… but if it was later than it should, and they would get shouted at. And also a lots of *face* kind of things, so..., you know, it is quite difficult for the Chinese… because they were shouted at by a Westerner. They probably found that quite rude." (InterviewNote-1:3) Here it shows that on the one hand he was able to draw from his knowledge of Chinese culture in his assessment of the situation, and was thus able to empathise what these colleagues would feel. On the other hand, he pointed out another cause of the

social dysfunction, the impact of cultural identity, wherein the process of cultural categorisation and self-identification would often result in attribution errors.

In regard to the impact of *face* on behaviour, he was able to bring the link between the concept of *face* and indirect behaviours, and suggested that due to the concern for face or to avoid conflicts his Chinese colleagues and friends sometimes felt it difficult to express their disagreements or to say 'no' to a request explicitly, and would thus avoid problems or resort to indirect means of communication. This can be seen from the following account:

> … And before they telephoned they'd say "*Keyi, keyi. Mingtian*" (OK. I'll do it tomorrow.), and I'd say yes, tomorrow is fine. But then when I asked them later if they had made the phone call, then they probably hadn't. They hadn't done it. Or, I would say, I would ask them if they agreed with something, like an opinion or…. I would say if you agree with this, they would say: yeah, yeah, I agree with it, it is a good opinion. But you know, they never said why they agreed with it. So I got the impression that it was just that they agreed for the sake of it. …Um…to avoid conflict..., and also just for keeping face. The whole thing of a...you know, they...if you ask them if they can do something, they probable say yes. But maybe...maybe it would be harder than they...they'd let you know. But they don't want to show that they can't do something…that's what I found. (InterviewNote-1:4)

Being able to see the impact of *face* concern on behaviours in Chinese culture and realised different ways to approach arguments or conflicts, he said that when interacting with his Chinese colleagues and friends he would try to be very careful not to pose threats to their face, in his words, "I don't think Chinese people, when you had an argument, are as rude as Western people can be. So I... when I was... if I would argue with a Chinese person, *I'd try to be very careful not to be too rude, because I don't want them to be very embarrassed, or lose face.*" (InterviewNote-1:7) This shows his understanding of the behavioural differences between the two cultures, which can be seen further from the following: "(in England) people are much direct, which is good, but they're also much ...um they could be much ruder.... So, that is not always, not a greatest thing about England." (InterviewNote-1:15) It seems evident here he was trying to reflect on the behavioural norms of his own culture in relation to that of Chinese, and was able to compare the different perspectives in regard to approaches to conflicts and thus to be able to empathise. In accordance with ICC model, there is a development in terms of *savoir être*, *savoir comprendre, savoir apprendre/faire* and *savoirs*, as he was not only willing to discover and accept other worldviews, reflect on his own worldviews, but was also able to identify significant references and their meanings. In terms of development in intercultural sensitivity, it appears that he was able to adjust his

behaviour on the basis of an understanding other perspectives, showing evidence of *adaptation*.

On the other hand, there is clear evidence that he was frustrated sometimes by not being able to reach mutual understanding and co-operation between him and his Chinese colleagues. In the questionnaire he stated the view that the Chinese way of communication is more ambiguous than that of his own, and said that there was the "[T]radition of saying one thing really meaning another" (QII-No.4). This was further explicated in the interview, which I quoted above. He believed that due to concern for face, sometimes his Chinese colleagues showed agreements to his views or requests simply because they didn't want to be seen in disagreement or they were worried about losing face. In cases like these, obviously, words cannot be taken at face value, and it would be problematic if you don't know the true intentions of your interlocutors. He believed, however, that in general he could tell if his interlocutors really meant what they said from some paralinguistic behaviours, such as use of tones, change of subject, etc., which will be discussed later.

Nevertheless, being able to recognise behavioural signals of others does not necessarily mean having real understanding of them, and hence having the competence to make sound judgements on behavioural responses, or even to empathise with different views. Judging from what he said, it is clear that he did find it hard sometimes to manage the differences in communication styles, and his words betrayed the anxiety he experienced. For instance, we can see how he felt from his descriptions of the way his Chinese colleagues dealt with conflict:

> But sometimes they got very difficult, because they ... they took almost a childish ... response, they tried to pretend it was not the sort of problem, or nothing had happened, and that would make me quite angry. ... They just tried to pretend. If there was a conflict or argument, they just pretended that ... it wasn't ..." (InterviewNote-1:7)

It can be speculated that he became frustrated because he thought he had patiently explained his views and was willing to listen to their arguments, but they didn't respond as he expected, instead, they, in his words: "*evade the problem*" (InterviewNote-1:6). It is obvious that he found it difficult to mediate between the differences between them, as he was not clear about their perspectives. From the words 'childish', 'pretend', and 'evade the problem', it can be seen that he was making the judgements of the events from an external perspective, and therefore the attributions are dispositional rather than situational oriented (Jaspars and Hewstone, 1982).

The feeling of frustration can be further seen from another remark he made in regard to the indirect communication style: "I would say to them to do it this way and why. They'd probably say yes, yes, yes, and right at the end they probably would say, we'd still like to do it this way. So it is a waste of time having the argument anyway", and "the more it went on, and they would get more *stubborn*...if they believe they would do it one way, they would still do it...the same way, I think." (InterviewNote-1:7) Here there seems to be little shared understanding between the two parties and again the word 'stubborn' shows a dispositional attribution.

The tone of his description apparently showed his frustration, even irritation, which apparently resulted from the failure of having his expectations fulfilled and the failure of achieving shared meanings. It is obvious that the communications did not achieve the desired effect, or mutual understanding. Leaving the emotions aside, it should be said that his descriptions depict rather clearly and accurately what often happens to people who communicate across the cultures. The difference in communication styles seems to be a big obstacle to good intercultural understanding. With regard to shifting perspective in interpreting meanings, as has been suggested, there is a lack of strong evidence here of taking the other's point of view, or making situational attributions, such as why they did things the way they did. The judgements that we saw above appear to be more dispositional oriented, and they seem to be based more on the behavioural standards of his own cultural frame of reference. We can see that he still has difficulties to shift perspectives when handling conflicts.

It has to be said though that social environment plays an important role in one's adaptation and communication, and therefore the attitudes and cooperation of the other side of the interaction plays an important role. But according to what he said, he enjoyed a good relationship with his Chinese colleagues, and was more than positive about it: "I felt by the time I left the office, I finished in the middle of July, I felt very much part of the office, … in terms of working environment it can be just as happy, or even better than working in a… in England." (InterviewNote-1:15) So it is reasonable to assume that the environment for social interaction was predominantly friendly and cooperative, and the difficulties were mainly the result of lack of thorough understanding of the indirect communication style.

This suggests a need for further development in *savoir, savoir comprendre*, i.e., to gain the insights into the host culture so as to make more accurate interpretations of

messages from host members. That, however, requires both the attitudes to commit oneself to deep understanding of the other's perspectives and the skills to discover different meanings that are attached to behaviour. In ICC competence terms, it means further development is also needed in *savoir être* and *savoir apprendre/faire*. From the perspective of intercultural sensitivity development, this suggests the need for good understanding of the others' worldviews so as to become less dependent on a monocultural perspective. That is to say, to be able to better adapt both behaviourally and emotionally rather than stay with *acceptance,* even *denial*, there is still a need to enhance cultural awareness and cultural understanding in order to go beyond the confinement of the home cultural framework, and to understand the basic different beliefs and values that affect one's worldviews.

It seems that further understanding of the impact of cultural differences on meaning production is necessary, especially in relation to cultural identity issues. The data reflects that despite his intent of being non-judgemental of differences, the informant sometimes appeared to unintentionally make attributions that were somewhat self-biased, indicating a limit in terms of development in *savoir être*, *savoirs*, and *savoir comprendre*. As was shown in Chapter 2, meaning production and perception is profoundly affected by social categorisation and self-identification, so the self-biased interpretation suggests a lack of clear understanding of the consequences of cultural identity on the management of relationships and perception of meanings. Self-biased interpretation is to a large degree a consequence of lacking deep understanding of another meaning system or other perspectives. This means that apart from raising further cultural awareness, development in *savoirs* requires also a deeper understanding of the other's perspectives.

Now let's take a closer look at what insights that he gained into Chinese culture. First of all, it can be seen from the data that he was able to identify some behavioural differences such as verbal, non-verbal signals, and ways of communication. For example, in the second questionnaire, he said that there was a difference between Chinese culture and his own culture in terms of eye contact and body language. Also, he described the way Chinese people communicate as more ambiguous than that of his own culture (QII-No.4). In explaining in the interview how he coped with messages that appeared ambiguous, he gave some examples to show how his Chinese colleagues signalled their intentions by employing paralinguistic signs, such as using low voice, vague language, and changing subjects of the conversations. He said: "I just could see if

something is difficult, if it wasn't going to happen or... or if they didn't really mean something, then I could tell, because they just say: (in low voice) *Ye hao, keyi keyi* (That's fine, it's OK)." (InterviewNote-1:5)

A further example of his understanding of behavioural differences can be seen from his description of how some Chinese girls in his office handled the conflicts when being shouted at by their Australia boss. He said: "*Sometimes the girls giggled, but then ... they'd probable disappear... started, you know, talking in quick Chinese about the Western... editor*. ... maybe they wouldn't always take it that seriously, um...but when they were shouted at, probably they would be upset, I think." (InterviewNote-1:3) On the one hand he was trying to look at the situation from the perspective of the girls and empathised with their feelings. On the other hand, he appeared not so sure about the meaning of the behaviour, suggesting that it had something to do with their being upset, while at the same time he also interpreted it as a sign of not taking the shouting too seriously. It is very clear that he noticed the difference in approach between the cultures in handling conflicts. Instead of confronting, the girls 'giggled', and 'disappeared'. They didn't argue, they didn't explain, they just avoided confrontation. The example shown earlier also revealed his awareness of the difference in approaching conflict, where he made the comment that in his opinion Chinese people were not as rude as western people could be in an argument. It is because they *"tried to avoid conflict"*. (InterviewNote-1:7)

He was right about the avoidance of confrontation, but did not seem to have full appreciation of the social factors associated with this behaviour, and therefore its meaning. In my view, given the social context, the girls 'giggled' and 'disappeared' may have much more to do with their approach in dealing with conflict than not taking the situation very seriously, although that might also be the case. It is quite likely the case that due to the traditional style of indirect communication and the expectation of respect for authority in Chinese culture, the girls might feel it quite difficult to discuss with their boss or explain what had happened, therefore giggle was a way of accepting criticism and avoiding direct confrontation or further embarrassment, and that is not uncommon in Chinese culture.

As well as behavioural differences, he was also able to identify some conceptual differences that underlie various behaviours. For instance, as has been shown, he was able to link indirect behaviours to the concept of *face* in Chinese culture, and therefore

was able to explain how indirect means were employed to avoid conflict and embarrassment in social interactions. Apart from this, he was also able to identify some other beliefs and values that have significant influence on social behaviours, especially in relation to workplace routines and business practices in China. For example, he was able to tell the differences between his culture and Chinese culture in terms of relationship between business and personal friendship, and attitudes towards power and privacy. In regard to relationship between business and friendship, he explained the difference as follows: in UK "you just speak over the phone and that's all", but in China "you have to win their trust, and...and build up *guanxi*.... You have to be patient in getting to know your...client...or you have to...maybe you have to have dinners with the client..." (InterviewNote-1:8). What is implied is that the concept of business differs between the cultures, and he was able to see the intertwined relationship between friendship and business relationship.

He also cited his father's experience of doing business in China to illustrate the process of establishing relationship with their Chinese partners, which involved having frequent dinners and drinks together, and that sometimes meant an involvement of a lot of people, even the whole office. In his words, it was "to make the friendship, not just business." The previous section has shown that *guanxi* plays a prominent role in Chinese society so much so that no one there can afford to ignore it completely. He recognised its importance in terms of working or doing business in China, and also seemed to be willing to accept it. When talking about what is needed in preparation for an outsider to work in China, one of the points he made was: "but you need to ... start building up *guanxi*. Um... as long as the outsider understands... the whole thing about connections he should be OK." However, he could see potential conflicts when he said: "they know somebody who could help, so they want to involve their friends, which the Western boss might find a little bit pushy or... I just get the impression that... you know, they try to involve friends and family business as well." (InterviewNote-1:8) this shows that he was able to understand *guanxi* as a prominent social phenomenon in Chinese culture and its implications to cross-cultural business. These examples shows clear evidence of development in *savoirs* and *savoir comprendre* and a hint of development in *savoir s'engager*, as he was able to see a misfit between different value systems, although there is no clear evidence of making critical judgements on explicit value standards.

As this investigation was focused predominantly on views and perceptions of communication styles and cross-cultural work-related behaviours, there is an obvious limitation in information coverage. However, apart from this the data did reveal to some degree his understanding of other aspects of social life in China. For instance, he recognised that young people in China behave quite differently from their elders (QII-No.4). Also, he could see a large gap between himself and ordinary Chinese students in life style. In comparison with them, he said, he and his peers had "[S]o much free time, so much socialising, drinking, um... you know, girlfriends. All these they found shocking." (InterviewNote-1:14)

Overall, it is evident that the informant was able to socialise with Chinese people during his sojourn and gained a lot of understanding of the culture and the people. Although the data are limited in scope, they nevertheless enable us to have a picture of the informant in terms of intercultural competence development. In regard to *savoirs*, it seems evident that he was aware of the danger of ethnocentric behaviours, and understood that misunderstandings and dysfunctions occur because of behaviours like disrespect of difference, inflexibility, lack of understanding of other's perspectives, etc., and therefore he had some explicit ideas of how to avoid making such mistakes. On the other hand, he was able to identify some perceptual and behavioural characteristics of Chinese culture, such as indirect communication styles, the emphasis on *face*, *guanxi* in social relations and interactions, to mingle friendship with business, etc. He also had clear ideas of how Chinese people went about their everyday life. But as I have shown, he sometimes had difficulties to understand the perspectives of his Chinese interlocutors.

In terms of development in *savoir comprendre*, there has been evidence that the informant was able to identify several sources of misunderstandings and dysfunctions, e.g. misinterpretations of behaviours resulted from a lack of sufficient linguistic skills to convey meanings fully and explicitly, different communication styles such as direct vs. indirect approaches, different concepts about interpersonal distance like privacy, the boundaries between work-related and personal relationships, and, not very explicitly perhaps, the impact of cultural identity on relationships. In regard to *savoir apprendre/faire,* first of all, there is clear evidence that the informant was able to build good relationships and socialise with his Chinese colleagues and friends. There is not only evidence that he was able to give clear accounts of how to manage across-cultural interactions, such as managing ambiguity, anxiety, and relationship, etc., part of *savoirs*, but also some evidence of his implementing the skills in handling interactions. As

shown earlier, in order to win trust from his Chinese interlocutors, sometimes despite being laughed at because of his accent, he would insist on speaking Chinese as a sign of respect. (InterviewNote-1:12) Also, despite having different concepts of privacy, boundaries of work and friendship, he was able to be flexible in accommodating the differences. Finally, the data shows that through socialising with host members he was able to find out different perspectives from his Chinese interlocutors.

However, it appears that he found it difficult to elicit meanings from some of his Chinese colleagues and to mediate between the differences in a conflict situation. The frustration that we saw earlier over the different communication styles is a sign of lacking some skills and knowledge to handle conflicts. He emphasised that he tried to make his own points of view understood and showed his willingness to listen to their views. It seems that he was expecting them to act in a more direct manner similar to his, and that might be one of the reasons why he found it difficult to get responses that he expected from them. It is likely that he was not able yet to pick up context-bound information and therefore was unable to decipher their meanings and intentions. As our earlier discussion shows, indirect communication is rather context oriented, and to be able to communicate effectively one needs to have a good grasp of the social values and beliefs associated with it, such as the attitudes towards power, towards self and others, and towards ingroups and outgroups, etc., that are fundamental to the social rules and behavioural norms.

Finally, let's take a look at the aspect of *savoir s'engager*. There is little evidence in the data that shows an obvious development in this respect. However, as I mentioned earlier, although he was explicit that for an outsider working in China it is necessary for him or her to understand the importance of building up *guanxi*, nevertheless, he was able to see potential problems in terms of value conflicts. He suggested that *guanxi* implies possible involvement of families and friends into business, and that is not viewed to be a correct way of doing business in the West. It shows that he was able to see the social implications of the behaviour.

To apply the concept of intercultural sensitivity development to this case, first of all, one can see that the informant was both willing and able to socialise with host members. He was quite aware of some of the causes of dysfunctions and was able to implement a range of knowledge and skills to adapt to the new cultural environment. Also, the knowledge that he gained about the host culture enabled him to empathise

with different ways of social interactions, such as being careful not to hurt the other's *face*. These are clear indications that he was moving beyond the stage of *acceptance*, i.e., simply showing respect to differences. On the other hand, as his understanding of the host culture was still limited, sometimes he was not able to make accurate interpretations of the other's behaviours and hence take well-informed actions. A lingering of ethnocentricity can be sensed sometimes in his interpretations. We saw the example that although he made a lot of effort to communicate his meanings to his interlocutors, nevertheless, both he and they failed to shift perspectives in interpreting meanings. From this perspective, it seems to me that to be able to adapt more fully both behaviourally and psychologically, further development is necessary both in terms of understanding the perspectives of the host culture and raising awareness of the impact of identity issues on relationships and behaviours.

Now, I will summarise the issues that draw my attention in this case analysis in two aspects. One concerns the issue of the competence development, and the other the issues related to using the two models to analyse the data.

In regard to the former, several points can be drawn from the analysis:

- The sojourn experience enabled good insights into the host society in terms of behavioural norms and some prominent social values, the social reality, etc., and the work experience helped with an understanding of multicultural workplace;
- An understanding of the behavioural features of the culture such as concern for *face*, *guanxi*, indirect communication style, etc. enabled an appreciation of the complexity of intercultural communication in general, and cross-cultural business in particular.
- The difficulties the informant experienced seem to be related to different ways of handling conflicts or different communication styles in general, as well as a lack of clear understanding of the impact of cultural identity on meaning interpretation. Linguistic deficiency seems to be another contributor to his difficulties.

As for the latter, a few words can be said about the application of the models:

- Through the data analysis one can find the strategies that the informant applied or intended to apply in socialising with host members, such as patience, tolerance, flexibility, courtesy, and listening skills, which are

essential skill for intercultural communication, particularly useful at the early stage of ethnorelative development. However, these are either not explicitly stated or not fully addressed in the two models, even though they are an important part of intercultural competence or intercultural communicative competence.

- The analysis shows that assessment of the development of intercultural competence is a very complicated task as development does not go in a clear-cut fashion. The informant was seen clearly in the stage of *adaptation* on most occasions, but there were events where ethnocentricity could still be traced. This suggests the broadness of the intercultural sensitivity model sometimes is difficult to operate.
- The overall outcomes of the analysis from the perspective of each model seem to point in the same direction: further development is needed before reaching the stage of either a competent intercultural speaker or an interculturally well adapted person. It is not surprising since the two models are used in a way in combination, but there is compatibility between the two models, and thus the outcomes support each other.

Individual Profile – Informant B

As explained already, due to timetable clash Informant B and Informant C were re-arranged to be interviewed together, and during the interview they were asked questions in turns. This means that they were sometimes asked the same questions, and their responses inspired each other and were supplementary to each other. Due to time constraints not all of the issues meant to be asked in each case were covered, but on the other hand this joint interview also allowed the same issues to be looked at sometimes from different angles, and therefore provide good information.

Informant B participated in all the three stages of the data collection, and he appeared very positive towards his sojourn experience. In the first questionnaire he was seen to be very satisfied with what he had experienced in his first 3 months in Beijing, and chose the statement of 'exciting and happy' to describe it. He also thought it to be 'completely different' from his expectations (QI-No.3). As one can find below, during this period he was able to get involved in socialising with Chinese people and observed and learnt some differences between his own culture and Chinese culture in terms of social institutions, behaviours and perceptions. In the subsequent interview he provided

some explanations and concrete examples of what made it easy or difficult to interact with Chinese people, and how he was treated by his Chinese friends, from which one can find some clues as to why he thought the experience was different from his expectations.

The first questionnaire shows that the sojourn experience enabled him to interact with host members and to observe some differences between the two cultures in terms of behaviour and life styles. I will show how he socialised with host members in detail later, but will look at this experience in general first. He cited a few examples to demonstrate these, such as the convenience of public bus service, the comparatively lower efficiency of the bureaucratic system, early morning park activities in Beijing, social etiquette like table manners and the correct way of accepting a business card – a small but important protocol in business socialisation, etc. Some behaviour was apparently unpleasant by any standards such as spitting on the street, and some inappropriate in accordance with his own cultural standards like blunt comments like 'you are too tall/fat' (QI-No.3) etc., but his attitude towards these was: "It is just a cultural difference, which is easily adjusted to." (QI-No.3) These show that he was a keen observer, who was open-minded towards differences and ready to learn new things.

In the second questionnaire, again, he appeared very positive, and chose to describe his work experience as 'quite happy' and 'quite valuable' (QII-No.2). This and the subsequent interview show that he was able to establish very close friendships with host members and to socialise with them effectively. For instance, he said this about a young Chinese friend of his: "I was travelling with a young Chinese friend in the summer, and I felt I could say anything to him." (InterviewNote-1:3) This is clearly an indication of his close involvement in socialisation with host members and the ability in managing communication with them. Now I shall take a closer look at these aspects.

First, let's look at his involvement in socialisation and how he managed it. In responding to the question of whether he felt he was treated by his Chinese colleagues as an 'ingroup', he said he did not think he was treated, as phrased in the questionnaire, 'as one of them' (QII-No.2). Although this issue was not pursued any further and it is not known how exactly he felt about the treatment he received at workplace, yet from the first questionnaire and the interview, it can be seen that he perceived himself to be often treated kindly or, in his words: "I think I am treated 'specially' – once a friend sat in a taxi with me to the opposite side of town, in order for me to find a concert hall."

(QI-No.3) On the one hand, his gratitude and satisfaction with the relationships with host members can be felt clearly from the word 'specially', while on the other hand, this event is a clear hint of his abilities to socialise with host members and to manage relationships.

In the interview he provided another example of his experience with a Chinese friend to demonstrate the point that a younger generation of Chinese seemed to be more open-minded towards the outside world and foreigners than their elders, which will be dealt with later. But let's see what he said when he recalled his visit to Dunhuang (a place in the northwest of China where a lot of fine frescoes and other early works of art were discovered in some grottoes in the early 20th century) with this friend:

> ... And there is a big sign saying this, you know, … some of the sculptures were taken by En… an English explorer, and taken away to England, and they were later destroyed, and something like this. And I felt very uncomfortable because of that, although... you know, so many people will go through this area. And he said: *Mei guanxi, zhe shi guoqu de shi*. (It is alright. That's what happened in the past.) (InterviewNote-2:3)

As far as our current point is concerned, we can see that he was able to socialise to the level where he could trust his Chinese friend, and share views and emotions with him, and as I quoted earlier, he felt that he could say anything to him. His friend made the point that he should bear no responsibilities for things that happened in the past, and from what he described one can understand why he thought he was treated not as an in-group but with understanding and kindness.

The above examples demonstrate both his involvement in socialisations with host members and his abilities in managing relationships and communication with them. His friendships with host members show both his strong desire to fit into his new cultural environment and his effort and ability to achieve mutual satisfaction in communication. To understand these in terms of ICC competence, this suggests the presence of several aspects of *savoir être*, *savoirs* and *savoir apprendre/faire*. To be more specific, the willingness to engage with otherness and the readiness to participate in verbal and non-verbal interactions can be felt clearly; a good level of awareness of the causes of misunderstandings and dysfunctions and some knowledge of how to act appropriately can be inferred; and a considerable level of skills to identify similarities and differences in meaning interpretation, to convey intentions and meanings, and to maintain relationships can also be inferred. I shall look for evidence to support these inferences, but go back to the last example, his account of his experience in Dunhuang shows his

awareness of how the historic event was interpreted by host members and its impact on national memory.

Despite his close relationships with Chinese friends and colleagues, in general he found it a challenge to establish good quality relationships with host members. In the first questionnaire, he stated the view that on the one hand many Chinese people, especially students in Renda (Renmin University in Beijing) were willing to talk to foreigners, because, as he put it, "many people find foreigners very interesting" (QI-No.3), and that made it easy for them to socialise with Chinese people. But on the other hand, he found it hard to establish close or good quality relationships. For one thing, he realised that some of the Chinese students they met were basically interested in practising their own English, not in forming friendships, a point shared by many of his fellow students. Moreover, there was a lack of a suitable environment to socialise with Chinese students as "[F]oreign students are all kept in one building" (QI-No.3) and because of this situation he said in the interview that in general there was a lack of opportunity to socialise and to build up close relationships with Chinese people, a point that was entirely agreed upon by Informant C. The following discussion will reveal what had hampered their socialisation with host members:

> ... well, … it's quite specific. But last year because of the nature of it, it made quite difficult... Although you were in China, and there are 1.3 billion Chinese people, you still found it difficult to meet Chinese people. I think that's just due to the nature of our study environment. We were all put in the same building, (agreed by Informant C) separated from Chinese people. And I know it's similar in…in terms of… if you work in China, there is only a certain number of places where you can choose to live, and that's usually with foreigners and in foreign compounds, and I think it makes very difficult to… to actually go out and socialise with people. (InterviewNote-2:15)

There are two things worth noting here. First, there is evidence of development in *savoirs*. His personal experience enabled him to understand the social conditions of living and working in China, and how that could affect a sojourner in his or her communication and socialisation with host members. The fact that they had to live separately from Chinese students and other Chinese communities was thought to be a big obstacle to making Chinese friends. Both he and Informant C, and presumably the rest of his follow students, were quite aware of the fact that many expatriates were in the same situation, wherein they had to live in foreigners' compounds, where they had better living conditions but were often quite isolated from Chinese communities. The impact of this physical restriction on socialisation with Chinese people is reflected clearly in his remark: "*Although you were in China, and there are 1.3 billion Chinese*

people, you still found difficult to meet Chinese people." This from one aspect shows the difficulties of accessing host communities.

Apart from this, he also suggested that a lack of language competence might hinder their own effort to go out and meet people, and he admitted that it was much easier to talk among friends who shared the language and culture and thus suggested that 'laziness', or perhaps a lack of confidence was often another factor that affected his engagement with host members. Maybe that is why he emphasised consistently, at every stage of this data collection, that language skills were most essential for successful cross-cultural interactions, a point, again, will be dealt with later.

Now I will present a few close shots of how he interacted and communicated with host members. He felt that at his workplace he met the expectations of his Chinese colleagues and that they appreciated the fact that he spoke some Chinese. Like Informant A, he claimed to enjoy the experience of working with host members and stated that he wouldn't be happier working only with people whom he shared the culture with (QII-No.2). However, different from Informant A, he didn't think extra effort was needed in establishing good relationships with his Chinese colleagues (QII-No.2). One of the possible reasons why he thought no extra effort was needed could be because of the social environment that he was in, about which he said: "I suppose it was operated with a completely Westernised manner, and … I suppose the Chinese staff had been … adapted into that, really." On the other hand, the foreign staff in the office was also said to speak Chinese, so it is reasonable to believe that the level of cooperation and communication would be relatively good, as he described: "For example, foreigners in the office could all speak Chinese… um very well. ..... The fact that they had already learned the language, and had already understood the culture... helped too. It improves their relations in office." (InterviewNote-2:6) So, it is possible that he found it not stressful to communicate with his Chinese colleagues in such a context.

However, that seems only part of the truth, and as it will become further evident, he did make good efforts to fit into the new cultural environment. So, another possible reason could be that he was not highly aware of the effort he was making or did not perceive his adaptive behaviours as *extra* efforts, i.e., that was what he expected of communication across the cultures. Although he did several times emphasise the need for exercising care or mindfulness and did consciously make behavioural adjustments,

he might not count that as *extra* effort. What one can see from the account above is that he did acknowledge the importance of cultural understanding and language competence.

The data show that he stated repeatedly the need for being mindful in intercultural communication. For example, when being asked if he was aware of any topics being avoided by his Chinese interlocutors, he responded with the following remark: "*No, but I avoid talking about politics – I feel as if I do not know enough about Chinese politics, and may easily offend someone, unintentionally.*" (QI-No.3) Taking account here only of his conscious decision on what adaptive actions to take, it can be seen that he was quite aware of, and thus prepared to take measures to prevent the potential danger of intercultural or cross-cultural communication. Further evidence of this can be found from the next example. In explaining the reason why he thought the year in China had resulted in his change of perceptions of cross-cultural communication, he made the following account:

> I've been abroad before, and ...for example, I was brought up in Hong Kong, and ...I never thought that cross-cultural communication was a particular problem of any kind. It is only this year, or ...sorry, last year, whatever it was, in China when I found that I had to try harder to communicate with Chinese people, and ...I found that ...many Chinese people probably didn't understand Western values. I remember when it came to humour, it was a different concept altogether really.... when I first arrived in China, I was trying to be funny with my Chinese friends by being sarcastic... but this didn't seem to go down very well. And from that moment on, I... I never try to be funny, and I always thought that as I was abroad I would have to try to fit in. So it became more to the point where I was always trying to be polite, and more... um... understanding of them rather than bringing over my own personality. (InterviewNote-2:2)

Notice the words that he used here '*I had to try harder to communicate with Chinese people*', '*from that moment on, I never try to be funny, and I always thought that as I was abroad I would have to try to fit in*'. They show very clearly that he was knowingly making a lot of effort in his communication with his Chinese interlocutors, and also making deliberate behavioural adjustments so as to avoid misunderstandings.

It seems that there are two explanations as to why he did not feel extra effort was needed. One is that he was aware of and accepted the fact that a lot of efforts and flexibility would be expected in intercultural communication, and was thus fully prepared to try his best. Therefore although he admitted making a lot of effort, he did not count it as extra. Also, partly because of this, and partly because of the specific environment he was in, he might have encountered fewer difficulties in communication, and therefore did not feel strongly that much more was demanded of him. However, the above examples show that he was prepared to be open-minded, flexible, and willing to

accept differences and make adaptive changes. Also, from the statement that he would try 'understanding of them' rather than presenting his own 'personality', it appears that in addition to acceptance of difference, he was interested in discovering the other's perspectives. All these further evidenced his development in *savoirs*, and *savoir être*.

The above examples also provide evidence of how he consciously adapted himself to the new cultural environment. As shown earlier, he consciously avoided political topics for fear of causing offence unintentionally. This point was repeated and elaborated in the interview, where he explained why he would try to stay away from discussions on politics:

> I'll avoid topics like politics … um … things that, you know, we were talking openly about, things that appearing, for example, in the media here, will not instantly be … acceptable to talk about in China from a …Westerner's point of view. Perhaps it'd make them uneasy. (InterviewNote-2:2)

Evidently, he was aware of the differences in views and beliefs involved in such issues and emotions attached to them, and the sensitive nature of politics in some cultural environments. He acknowledged that his views or what he had acquired from mass media in his culture could appear to be biased, or simply the Western points of view; and the things people take for granted in his culture might be perceived sensitive there, thus causing uneasiness to his Chinese interlocutors. Similarly, when his Chinese interlocutors failed to pick up his humour, he realised his own cultural assumptions behind this behaviour, and said: "many Chinese people probably didn't understand Western values", and therefore it is necessary for him to make some adjustment – "from that moment on ... I never try to be funny".

The above discussion provides part of the explanation as to why he thought the sojourning experience was very different from his expectations. As can be seen from the example quoted above, he did not expect that cross-cultural communication would be a problem, as he was brought up in Hong Kong and previously had some experience abroad. But out of his expectation, he found that he had to try very hard to communicate when he was in China. This discovery marks a development in cultural awareness. It is evident that it is the intense cross-cultural encounter or deep involvement in cross-cultural socialisations that enabled this development. It seems that in whatever way, his sojourn in China was quite different from his other overseas experiences and that is why it was very different from his expectations. It becomes clear that he was highly aware of

how intercultural communication is affected by different cultural assumptions that interlocutors bring with them, and was thus trying to accommodate differences.

So far the discussion has shown some development in several areas of ICC competence. In terms of *savoirs*, he showed an understanding of where, how, and why difficulties occurred in his communication with his Chinese interlocutors. His accounts on political topics and English humour demonstrate rather evidently that he was able to look at these issues from the other's perspective or an angle that is different from his own – the presence of some understanding of the other's perspective, the presence of *savoir comprendre*.

Also, there is clear evidence that he was able to identify some differences in cultural perspectives as well as some of the root causes of misunderstandings and dysfunctions. On the basis of this he was also able to take measures to prevent against misunderstandings and to gain trust from his Chinese interlocutors. These support the assumptions made earlier that the informant must have developed some important skills in both *savoir comprendre* and *savoir apprendre/faire* since he was able to manage very well relationships and communication. As for *savoir être*, apart from what has been said earlier, further aspects of this can be identified, i.e., willingness to take the other's perspective into consideration when making interpretations. The example about sarcasm shows that he was able to think and act in an ethnorelative manner, and thus able to empathise with different perspectives and attitudes.

The earlier discussion mentioned that the informant took the case of how he was treated by his young Chinese friend as an example to demonstrate the point that the younger generation of Chinese is different from their elders. Now, let's go back to this point and take a close look at what he was arguing. In the interview Informant C made a comment that a lot of Chinese people he encountered were very defensive, and this statement appeared to have a tone of over-generalisation to Informant B, who he pointed out that there were differences between various social groups in their attitudes towards other cultures. He illustrated his point with the example of how open-minded and understanding this young Chinese friend of his was, and he made this comment: "I think it depends on which sub-section of society you are dealing with, whether with old people or younger generation. Because with the younger generation... I was travelling with a young Chinese friend in the summer, *and I felt I could say anything... to him.*"

(InterviewNote-2:3) This shows he began to rely less on simple stereotypes and was attempting to make finer discriminations of social phenomena and social contexts.

There are other examples too. For instance, in the interview, when discussing the relationships between direct/indirect, impolite/polite behaviours in relation to different cultures, his response was evidence that he was trying to look at the issue with wider perspective rather than making sweeping generalisations. He said: "It happens at different levels when you are dealing with it. High... higher powered people... you know, they are... always polite, and friends are always polite. But at the same time you can meet people from different... maybe different part of society, who were, say, who were very blunt to you, and asked you very direct questions..." (InterviewNote-2:11). Again, he was trying to make finer discriminations of different circumstances with a wider perspective, i.e., taking into account social contexts such as relationships between interlocutors, social situations, etc., rather than following stereotypes.

His awareness of the need for and ability to make situational judgements can also be seen from the next example. He stated that in his workplace there was a lot of need for politeness, and said "people in China are always pretty polite when it comes to... business." (InterviewNote-2:12) But Informant C had a quite different personal experience, and he described how, due to power difference, the film director and producer, whom he worked with, shouted a lot at people and used very direct and crude language. To this Informant B was able to add another perspective, suggesting that the lack of courtesy and elegance in the director/producer's behaviours might also have something to do with the nature of the work, because, he suggested, for this kind of industry 'time is money' (InterviewNote-2:12). Whatever was the situation this suggests that he was able to focus more on situations than on dispositional traits, which allows him to have better understanding or wider perspectives in interpretation. To understand this in terms of ICC competence, both the interest and the skills in discovering different meanings and perspectives can be identified, and thus further evidence of development in *savoir être* and *savoir apprendre/faire*, which play an important role in decentring.

The discussion that we have had so far has emphasised on how he managed the various aspects of intercultural communication in a non-cultural specific manner. There is also clear evidence that his understanding of the host culture enabled him to make his own decisions on communication strategies or how to approach cultural differences. For instance, he could tell some differences between the host culture and his home culture in

terms of communication styles and their underpinning beliefs and values. He stated that he did not expect a Chinese person to deal with a conflict in the same way as he would in a workplace (QII-No.2). And this point was elaborated in the interview, where he explained that he would probably take a head-to-head approach himself, but would suspect that would not be the case for a Chinese person, in his words:

> I think I would probably approach it directly, and take the problem to somebody else, or express my … problem with the person involved. And… I mean, not necessarily it would happen the other way, but I would… I would think maybe the other side would be more ambiguous in their approach. Not necessarily, but... (InterviewNote-2:11)

As for its reason, he made this speculation: "I think maybe... um... *in China there is a lot of politeness, and that's where the ambiguity comes from.* Um... maybe we are blunt to the point, too direct? I don't know. That's what we must seem like." (InterviewNote-2:11) What is evident here is that he was able to identify and compare some cultural tendencies in terms of communication styles. It appears obvious that he was trying to bring a link to the different aspects of the culture, i.e., indirect communication style, the ambiguous feature of this behaviour, and the value of politeness and respect required in social interactions, *face* perhaps. Also, he was reflecting on his own behavioural pattern from the Chinese perspective and was aware of different interpretations Chinese people might have. This is evidence of development in *savoirs*, *savoir comprendre*, and *savoir s'engager*.

Although he acknowledged that the Chinese way of communication is more ambiguous than his own (QI-No.3), he did not regard it as a problem. He said that he had encountered no difficulties in knowing the real intentions of his Chinese interlocutors (QII). This may be a sign of the ability to mediate differences and to discover new meanings, an element of *savoir apprendre/faire*, as is suggested by his explanations of the cause of ambiguity. According to him, apart from an indirect way of communication, it also has a lot to do with the nature of the language, about which, he said:

> I think it is the sort of basic nature of the language really, when there is no direct word for "yes". So you know, you can hardly get a direct answer for any question. And I found watching television … people being interviewed would reply by… referring to these old Chinese sayings …and *chengyu* (idiom/set phrase) or whatever, but you… it is almost impossible to get a direct answer. (InterviewNote-2:3)

His comment did accurately identify some of the factors that are believed to make Chinese language 'inscrutable' for many non-Chinese speakers, and they are exactly

some of the problems that have baffled many America or western traders and diplomats in their negotiations and talks with Chinese people (Young, 1994). According to Young, former American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was impressed by the way the late Chinese leader Mao Zedong conveyed his meaning in their talk through "the many-layered design" of his conversation, applying "elliptical phrases", and said "I understood that it was like the courtyards in the Forbidden City, each leading to a deeper recess distinguished from the others only by slight changes of proportion, with ultimate meaning residing in a totality that only long reflection could grasp" (1994:2).

The comment of the informant on the ambiguity of the language shows that he was able to understand how communication could be affected because of it. It can be assumed that the reason why he did not think ambiguity was really a problem for him in his communication with Chinese people might have something to do with his awareness of how and when ambiguity occurs, and therefore was able to take suitable measures, e.g. finding out real intentions through mediation. But more importantly, the attention he paid to the characteristics of the language shows his strong interest in language learning, which is an indication of his effort in adaptation. As I mentioned earlier, he stated repeatedly in the questionnaires and the interview that good language skills are essential for successful communication. For example, in responding to the question about what preparation would be useful for working abroad, his response was "[A] good understanding of the language is most important, and the desire to learn a particular culture." (QII-No.2) Later in the interview, he was also able to point out that in business people tended to use more formal language, and a lot of 'decorative' set phrases. This awareness presumably helped him to be alert and flexible in his communication with host members.

Some evidence can be found from the following example. Once in a street in China the informant was asked by a woman if he was interested in doing some summer school teaching for a replacement, he agreed and left her his telephone number. But when he was contacted later he realised that what the person actually meant to ask for was private tutorials instead of school teaching. He concluded the story with this, "She said something else, but in reality she was... after another... goal." (InterviewNote-2:4) Clearly, he did experience confusion and miscomprehension due to the different communication approaches. But the reason why it didn't bother him much seems to lie in his open attitude and the ability to learn. Evidence can be found from his remark on coping with ambiguity: "You'll have to think about it, because it wasn't obvious. But

you would have to think about it." (InterviewNote-2:7) Here he clearly laid stress on tolerance for ambiguity and being open, patient and acting mindfully. But at the same time, this attitude suggests clearly his reluctance to interpret different behaviours from his own perspective. This attitude can lead to the effort to discover different meanings and perspectives. Indeed, it can be seen from his words the interest and confidence in discovery and learning: "I think when you were in China... it is easier... to learn things, especially in relation to language. So I wouldn't be too concerned, because you can pick them up as you go." (InterviewNote-2:14) These words indicate his preparedness to engage with and to mediate between differences and his readiness to understand the other's perspectives, a support to the assumption made above. The enthusiasm in learning the language and the culture and the level of awareness that he demonstrated is a clear indication of his effort in adaptation. Again, a development is made in *savoir apprendre/faire*.

Like everyone else, he was very much aware of the significance of *guanxi* in social interactions, especially business interactions in the culture, and also had a pretty good idea of how it works. He gave an account of an experience he had in Beijing with some reporters as an example:

> It was a closed conference, which means only one reporter was allowed to go in. I can remember that he was from Chinese... I think … Chinese Daily… or a Chinese national state paper. And this one journalist went in, but because the journalists that we went with knew this person, and when he came out he passed the information to us. So you know, this wouldn't happen if you don't already know him. (InterviewNote-2:10)

He also explained that *guanxi* functions as a mutual beneficial social practice for the parties involved, and described it as "sort of like... I scratch your back and you scratch my back... that sort of situation" (InterviewNote-2:10). Therefore for the reporters who got information through *guanxi*, "at some point in the future it would have to work the other way" (InterviewNote-2:10). Both he and Informant C said that although this sort of social practice worked in many cultures, the difference was that in China it was taken for granted and operated on a wider scale. He was also aware that power has a very big role to play in this social practice, as he stated: "I think, to have some *guanxi* in China, somebody in a high position in business, maybe even in government, I'm sure, must be very useful to any outsider... foreigner." (InterviewNote-2:10)

He also stated that due to a few factors the process of doing business or work could take longer in China than what could be normally expected in UK. First, because of the need for *guanxi*, people have to spend time socialising with those they need to cooperate with and win their respect and trust, "maybe by going out, and having meals together or… you know, there is whole … communal meals thing, by someone hosting the meal, and you have to drink *baijiu* (rice wine/spirit) or beer, whatever ... I think to some extend you have to go through that process." (InterviewNote-2:8) Second, he pointed out that the bureaucratic system is another factor that affects work speed. He said: "I think that in China there is a lot of bureaucracy which could get in the way of … deals between foreigners and Chinese, and that could slow up the process." These clearly show his insights into how work would be affected by sociocultural factors.

From communication style to the characteristics of the Chinese language, from the way how Chinese people work and socialise to general social conditions, the informant appeared to have gained quite a lot of insights into the culture. Thus, apart from the intercultural communication procedural aspect of knowledge, there also can be seen a clear development in the other aspect of *savoirs* – understanding the other's perspectives or frames of reference.

Finally, with regard to *savoir s'engager*, there are some evidence that the informant attempted to seek deep understanding of behaviours such as *guanxi* by finding the relations of it to its underpinning values and social implications. There was also evidence of tentative reflections on his own behavioural norms vis-à-vis that of Chinese culture. These are indications that he was trying to relate behaviours to both the familiar and the unfamiliar frames of reference, or value standards, showing that he was to some degree able to identify different ideological views. This obviously would increase his cultural awareness and enable him to interpret behaviours and events from wider perspectives, and subsequently influence his decisions on how to interact. For instance, he was able to see the reasons why it was not always realistic to expect business to be done in the same way in China as in his own culture. As has been explained, the presence of these characteristics is a clear indication of *adaptation*.

Now I can summarise the discussion from the perspective of intercultural sensitivity development. In regard to *savoir être* throughout the discussion there can be seen not only an open and positive attitude towards otherness, but also the attitudes of learning and adapting to cultural differences. The informant emphasised understanding

and 'fitting in' in a new cultural environment as well as showing respect to otherness. In terms of action, there is strong evidence that in socialising with host members he took measures to adapt to the situations instead of simply being acceptant of differences. I have shown not only the measures that he took to avoid or reduce misunderstandings and dysfunctions, but also the ones for active engagement with and negotiations between differences. As well as being able to be tolerant of ambiguity and being flexible, he was also able to empathise with different views and concerns and thus to make evaluations of behaviours from wider perspectives. In terms of *savoir comprendre* and *savoir apprendre/faire*, for instance, there has been evidence that he was relying less on stereotypes and showed a tendency to make situational rather than dispositional based judgements on differences. There are also strong indications that he was able to negotiate meanings with his Chinese interlocutors, and he claimed that it was not a problem for him to pick up meanings or learn about their ways of behaving and thinking when having opportunities to interact with them. I have shown that he was able to shift perspectives in interpreting meanings and to interact with host members with a good level of satisfaction. In other words, he appeared capable of making adaptive adjustments in his interactions with host members.

Of course, being able to shift perspectives and make adaptive changes, in accordance with the intercultural sensitivity development model, is the outcome of cognitive development not only in cultural awareness, but also in understanding of different cultural assumptions and sentiments. The analysis shows that the informant was able to describe and explain some of the ways that host members perceived their social environment and acted upon it. The most obvious evidence is his insightful account of the complex nature of *guanxi* and its impact on social interactions, especially in regard to cross-cultural interactions. He was able to look at it from different aspects and therefore understood well its social implications. His account of how the nature of the Chinese language contributes to the ambiguity of the way Chinese people communicate is also strong evidence of his knowledge of the host culture. Based on all this evidence, it seems reasonable to believe that he was well into the stage of *adaptation*.

Overall, there is evidence to prove development in all the aspects of the ICC model. In terms of intercultural sensitivity development, there is clear evidence that the informant was able to decentre and to apply different worldviews in his interpretation of

meanings. In regard to developing the competence for intercultural communication, what this case seems to suggest are the following:

- The open and flexible attitudes seem to be an important factor that enabled the informant to cope well with ambiguity and anxiety.
- The desire to 'fit in' appears to be an important motivation for learning the behavioural norms of the host culture, including both verbal and non-verbal behaviours.
- An awareness of impact of situation on behaviour enabled him to focus more on situational attribution rather than dispositional attribution, and that helped him to rely less on stereotypes.
- What appears to be a difference between this case and the previous case is that this informant seems to give more emphasis to situational attribution than dispositional attribution.
- Lack of sufficient language competence is identified as the major obstacle by the informant to successful communication.

While with regard to the models applied to the analysis, there is little to add to what was mentioned in the previous case. Again, there is a strong presence of the attitudes and skills that are fundamental to ethnorelativity, i.e., being open, respectful and flexible. There seems to be a close relationship between increase in sensitivity to different frame of reference, what is essential to the intercultural sensitivity model, and the skills termed as *savoir apprendre/faire* in the ICC model. That is, a strong presence of the skills to discover different meanings is necessary for development in intercultural sensitivity.

Individual Profile – Informant C

Informant C took part in all 3 stages of the data collection, and the data show that his emotional state changed after the first questionnaire from more positive towards the experience to less so. This was looked into closely in the interview. As I explained in the previous case, this was a joint interview with Informant B, and although it means less opportunity for each of them to express their opinions more thoroughly, nevertheless this was compensated for by a wider scope both in terms of experience and views, as shown by the previous case. Another advantage is that their responses prompted one another either to confirm a view or comment or to add another dimension to it.

It seems that Informant C went through some emotional difficulties during his sojourn. At the early stage he seemed to be reasonably happy, and according to my preparation work for the follow-up interview questions, he was rather positive about the experience. In the first questionnaire he used the phrases "exciting but also stressful sometimes" and "different – better than expected" to describe it (QI-No.10). But in the second questionnaire he stated frustration and unhappiness about his work experience, and described it as "not too much value" for him and himself to be "very unhappy" (QII-No.3). Although the two questions do not focus on exactly the same thing and therefore are not directly comparable, one on experience in China in general, and the other more specifically on work experience there, yet as can be seen later from his explanations of his emotional changes, his frustration should be understood both as an expression of a general intercultural phenomenon – culture shock – as well as a reaction to the specific problems he encountered at the workplace. Of course, these two aspects are interrelated and mutually influencing, and therefore should be viewed as such. The question is to what extent this emotion change is related to his interactions with and perception of his new cultural environment, hence indicative of his development in intercultural competence. The following discussion will focus first on the aspect of anxiety management, and then the aspect of cultural learning.

Let's start with an overview of his level of involvement in socialisation with host members and his own perceptions of how he managed it. First, there are some clear indications, both in the first questionnaire and the interview, of his involvement in socialisation with host members and of his friendships with them. For instance, in the first questionnaire as a response to the question of whether his Chinese friends treated him in the same way as they treated their co-national friends, he said that he felt he was treated with much politeness and that they "are politer towards foreigners than to their own friends" (QI-No.10). Later on he was also able to compare the behavioural differences in the host culture between how people interact with their friends and with those whom they do not know or not know so well. He stated that his close Chinese friends interacted with him in a more straightforward manner than those whom he was less familiar with, as he put it: "... *once you know them properly, and they seem to be friendlier at a less artificial level.*" (InterviewNote-2:8) These statements indicate clearly his involvement in social interactions with host members. They are also a reflection of a development in managing relationships, i.e., establishing friendships.

From these we can see an obvious interest in socialising with host members, signifying the presence of one aspect of *savoir être*. We can also see that through interactions with Chinese people, he gained some insights into how interpersonal behaviours were affected by the different social roles and relationships in the host cultural system. In terms of development in *savoirs*, we can see a progress in learning the behaviour of the host culture.

On the other hand, he appeared to have encountered some problems in managing interactions with some host members. For example, while being pleased that his Chinese friends were polite to him, he was quite upset by impolite behaviours of some Chinese people whom he encountered, as the first questionnaire shows. According to him, it is the impolite behaviours that hampered the growth of friendships, in his words: "It would help to start better friendships if they were more polite." He may have very good reasons to make such a complaint, yet as far as communication is concerned, one can sense some difficulties here. To try to understand his problems, let's first take a look at the ways or his perceptions of the ways he interacted with his Chinese interlocutors.

He stated in the first questionnaire that he was very careful in his interactions with host members, always trying to be polite and to avoid having conflicts with them. For instance, he stated: "*I tend not to ask anything that would be considered risqué*" (QI-No.10). Also, in answering the question of how he would react if caught up in a conflict with a Chinese interlocutor, he said: "try to find a diplomatic solution to the conflict. *But I would try to avoid a situation like this from the outset.*" (QI-No.10) It shows here that he was aware of the importance of supporting others' self-perceptions and thus put emphasis on showing respect and reaching mutual satisfaction. As far as he was concerned, he had not unintentionally caused any offence to his Chinese interlocutors. His emphasis on exercising care shows a degree of cultural awareness and willingness to engage in socialisations with host members, indicating the presence of part of *savoirs* and *savoir être*.

On the other hand however, referring specifically to his work environment, he stated in the second questionnaire that he was not sure if he had met the expectations of his Chinese colleagues. As far as his work experience is concerned, he felt extra effort was required of him in managing relationships with his Chinese colleagues, and the reason, according to him, is that "[*P*]*eople I work with can be suspicious of foreigners.*"

(QII-No.3) Although later in the interview he explained that the comment was made at the time when he was "emotionally drained and stressed, and … maybe it was just influenced by an event at that time when writing the questionnaire", it nevertheless revealed the frustration he experienced in socialising with his Chinese colleagues and the perceptions he had about them at that time. Obviously, he was not happy with the relationships with his Chinese colleagues. This shows clearly that the problems he had in socialisation with some host members played a significant role in his emotional disturbance, which, in turn, hampered his communication.

But to try to understand the issue it is necessary to take into account his work environment. According to him, the establishment that he worked for was a state-run educational organisation in China, and his work involved doing odd jobs in film, television, and modelling. Unlike the previous cases, according to him, in his workplace there was little communication between the Chinese staff and the foreign staff, the main reason being that most people there were on a temporary basis and they might not meet twice and therefore there was neither the opportunity nor the desire for them to establish friendships. Also, as mentioned in the previous case, the film directors and producers seldom had proper communications with the staff. One can get some idea of the context of his work from the following account:

> I found the Chinese crew there very, very seldom speak to me. Only people who direct in charge of me, as in the … um… my boss and agent would … talk to me, and … and the others … they would be in separate groups … foreigners on one side, and the Chinese on the other. And only a few… very few would talk between us, and the others just standing on the other side of the room, giving us sidelong glances. That may just be in the circumstances when I worked there. I can't say it is representative as a whole of Chinese business, or … indeed people. (InterviewNote-2:7)

Clearly there was a lack of communication as well as an interest in it in the place where he worked, and that, at least partly, explains why he disliked his work experience and came up with the idea that some of the Chinese people he worked with did not trust foreigners. This does provide a clear explanation for the question of why he was not sure if he had met the expectations of his Chinese colleagues. How could he know what was expected of him in such a context? As far as communication is concerned, this work experience did not seem to provide much opportunity and inspiration. In terms of emotional adjustment, this environment provided little help in reducing anxiety, to say the least, as there was obviously an atmosphere of indifference.

As shown in Chapter 3, according to Stephan and Stephan (2002), the fear of negative evaluations of outgroups, such as rejection and being looked down upon, is one of the four major causes of anxiety in intergroup interactions. Anxiety in turn affects communication both in terms of cognition and engagement. On the basis of this understanding, one can see that the unfavourable social environment that he was in was an important contributing factor to his emotional difficulties, which subsequently affected his perceptions and interactions with host members. So the point is: it is not that there was a lack of desire on his part for interaction with host members, rather it is the case of not being able to, a point that will become more evident later on.

The discussion so far has provided some evidence about his involvement in socialisation and the way he interacted with host members. On the one hand, there has been some evidence of his socialising and building up friendships with host members, but on the other hand, it is evident that the kind of reception he had at his workplace discouraged or deprived him of the chance of social interactions with host members. This helps to explain why he was unhappy about the relationship with his Chinese colleagues. In regard to his management of social interactions, it is not difficult to see that he made some conscious effort to avoid misinterpretations and communication breakdowns through employing skills such as being non-confrontational and showing respect.

Having had a brief overview of his involvement in social interactions with host members, I shall now come to examine more closely how his emotional state is related to his perceptions of and interactions with host members. As it will become clear, his management of cross-cultural anxiety was to a considerable extent a reflection of the way he managed communications in the new cultural environment. As anxiety could be both the cause and the result of communicational difficulties, the ability to manage it thus has important implications for the development of intercultural competence.

I shall argue that his dissatisfaction with the work experience can be better understood as a contributing factor to his experience of culture shock, which seen from the cultural learning perspective is the cumulative effect of having insufficient competence to negotiate one's new cultural environment. (Ward *et al*, 2001). Although it might be the case that he disliked his work experience because he found it boring or it had little to do with his personal interest or whatever, nevertheless, from the above discussion it is obvious that he was not pleased with the lack of communications

between the foreign and the Chinese staff, and felt the environment unfriendly. Understandably, this would create a sense of not being accepted or a feeling of misfit in the environment. Clear evidence of his experiencing culture shock can be seen from the following account, where he tried to explain why his mood changed so much since the first questionnaire. He said:

> I am not sure … what it was. Um…I think it is just the…um…I found that I was away from friends and family for the whole year, I felt…as the year progressed, I felt I was more tired, more (not audible). And I found…the very early mornings and constant…the constant longer terms, the 24-week terms very draining. And so by the time of the second…second…questionnaire, I was emotionally and physically drained. I…upon that time I…wasn't myself – I was angry more often and bitter. They weren't really…they possibly weren't my actual true feelings. But retrospectively I couldn't apply…I couldn't express…how I think I felt. (InterviewNote-2:5)

This description suggests clearly that he was in a state of culture shock, having some of the 'symptoms' described by Oberg such as being home sick, missing family and friends, feeling tired and angry, etc. (Furnham and Bochner, 1982). According to the culture learning model proposed by Bochner, cross-cultural psychological difficulties experienced by sojourners can be basically understood as the consequence of a lack of the necessary cultural skills and knowledge to negotiate one's new cultural settings. Moreover, Furnham and Bochner (1982) contend in their social network theory that better access to host society would enable sojourners to gain better knowledge and skills for adaptation, hence to reduce culture shock. Taking these perspectives, it can be seen that the major cause of the frustration is intrinsically a communication problem in the new cultural environment, both in the sense of gaining access to the host society and having the competence to carry out work and life effectively. Having said that, it must be pointed out here that according to some research, personality also has an important role to play in successful intercultural adaptations (Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee, 2002). That is to say, there was an ill fit between the environment and personality, and that should be a major factor influencing how he interacted with his environment.

Having made the point that the emotional difficulties that he experienced were basically an outcome of unsatisfactory communication, in the following discussion I will provide evidence to show how at the early stage of his sojourn his anxiety hindered his socialisation, and what effort he took subsequently to overcome the problem. Here is his description of what he experienced:

> I wasn't…I wasn't prepared for such…such shock. And it took a very long time to get used to it, and it was not until…until after Christmas time that I actually

> found myself comfortable, personally found it comfortable with the environment and accepting it. And actually then I made a more positive start towards…improving my language and going out and meeting with friends, and getting in touch with Chinese people more and more. But up until this point, I feel I'm still adjusting and I'm still in shock. I don't know why, may be it is just being me, personally not being able to adjust. (InterviewNote-2:5)

First, I would like to point out that there is a small difference beten this account here and that in the first questionnaire in regard to his emotional state in the first few months of his sojourn. As shown earlier, in the first questionnaire he left the impression of being reasonably happy about his experience, whereas as shown here, he felt settled only after Christmas, that is, after the first questionnaire. It is possible that despite the distress at that time he still thought his experience was better than expected and thus was overall positive about it in his first response. Another possible explanation is that by the time when the first questionnaire was carried out, his focus was more on things and experience that were new and exciting to him, and his interactions with host members were possibly still at a rather surface level, i.e., pleasant but not very effective, yet as time went on, his frustration accumulated and the person-environment misfit became more evident to him only after the questionnaire, thus not reflected in it.

Whatever the reason, apparently, as it is shown in the above account, he did find it hard, at least at the early stage of the sojourn, to cope with his new environment, particularly with regard to communication, and that, as he acknowledged, deprived him of the chance to improve his language – the knowledge and skills necessary for effective adaptation, and presumably, also intensified his culture shock. Realising where his problem was, he then made active effort to improve his situation – "*improving [his] language and going out and meeting with [Chinese] friends*", but as he admitted, it took a long while for him to overcome the culture shock, and even over two months after he returned to UK he could still felt its impact.

It appears that his emotional state had an influence on the ways he perceived his surroundings and others as well as on the way he conducted himself in behaviours. For example, as shown above, he acknowledged in the interview that the comment he made earlier about his Chinese colleagues' being suspicious of foreigners was probably affected by his mood at the time when the remark was made. Another comment that he made in the interview about the difficulties that he encountered also seems to show overtones of emotional discomfort, where he said: "I think that... most people's general attitude is very defensive, um... so whatever kind of subject that were brought up, if they didn't quite agree with it, they'd um... back off and ... go on defensive about it... in

the dialogue." As I mentioned in the previous case, this remark prompted a comment from Informant B about the need to make differentiations between different social groups instead of stereotyping. These examples give a clear impression that although he did make efforts in terms of socialising with host members, he was sometimes quite uneasy emotionally with regard to the relationships, and might have difficulties in mediating differences.

As the examples suggest, there seems to lack sufficient mutual understanding and cooperation between him and his Chinese interlocutors. In terms of interpretation of meanings, he seemed to have some difficulties to decentre in perceiving others' intentions. As the above examples show, while being able to observe the ethnocentric features in his Chinese interlocutors' behaviours, he did not seem to be aware of the ethnocentric perspective in his own remarks. It is highly possibly that some of his Chinese colleagues or interactants indeed behaved in an unfriendly manner and were defensive in their attitudes in interacting with foreigners, and his comments on their behaviours were not inaccurate as far as the individual cases are concerned. After all, that is where difficulties lie in intercultural encounters, and that is why it is important to develop intercultural competence. But the point here is that his interpretations of the behaviours show some characteristics of dispositional attribution and a tone of over-generalisation. Although he emphasised on a couple of occasions that only some people were not very accommodating and that contexts had to be taken into account, showing clearly awareness of the danger of generalisation, nevertheless, from the words such as "*most people's general attitude is very defensive*" there can be seen a trace of stereotyping. Consequently the behaviours of some individuals, i.e., his Chinese interlocutors, were taken as the general traits of a group of people rather than situational based individual behaviours. Understandably, such interpretations would do little to help to reduce culture shock on the one hand and to promote communication on the other hand. Now it becomes more clear that apart from lacking a friendly environment, not being able to negotiate different meanings with his interlocutors and hence to interact effectively was another cause of his anxiety, and the two, as the discussion shows, are not unrelated.

Taking only into consideration what has been said so far, I can summarise the above discussion from the perspective of the ICC model. In terms of *savoir comprendre*, it appears that he could identify some of the causes of communication breakdowns, but was not sensitive enough in terms of self awareness, and subsequently there is a lack of

the skills to incorporate different views and perceptions in interpretations of meanings. In terms of *savoirs*, on the one hand some evidence was identified earlier of his awareness of the importance in supporting others' self-perceptions, but on the other hand, there is not sufficient awareness and knowledge to guard against stereotyping or over-generalisation. As for the aspect of *savoir apprendre/faire*, we have seen him employing some skills such as using polite strategy, listening, etc. in order to avoid conflicts or misunderstandings. But so far the issues of how far he was able to manage eliciting from others their views and perspectives and to mediate differences in social interactions have not been looked into. In terms of *savoir être*, although there is clear evidence of being willing to socialise with host members, due to a lack of full appreciation of the difficult nature of intercultural communication, there is a sign of being judgemental and inflexible to differences.

From the perspective of intercultural sensitivity development, as far as these examples are concerned, the informant was making efforts to interact with host members and was taking some measures to prevent communication breakdowns. But at the same time, he did not seem to be very sensitive yet to the different worldviews, and his interpretation of differences seems to a considerable degree to be based on his own frame of reference. This suggests that he was trying to adapt but was not yet very sensitive to the cultural differences. He appeared to have some difficulties to shift cultural perspective, and one can even sense a trace of being judgemental of differences. These suggest that he was not completely in the stage of *adaptation*, and in some aspects, was not completely out of the scope of ethnocentrism.

As we have seen in the previous cases, the other two informants seemed to enjoy rather satisfactory relationships with their Chinese colleagues in their workplaces. In comparison with them, the social environment of the workplace for Informant C provided him with much less chance to get in touch with host members, and left him, presumably his colleagues as well, feeling isolated and frustrated. On top of this, it is shown in the previous case that it was a common consensus among the students that due to lack of access to the Chinese communities it was not easy to start good quality relationships with host members. This situation, as the evidence suggests, was a main cause of his anxiety, and subsequently affected his ICC competence development. He realised later that he couldn't wait for friendships to happen, and "had to... work at that, trying to make connections, trying to make friends." (InterviewNote-2:15), and therefore, as he recalled, he found himself going up and down the Chinese students'

flats meeting Chinese friends. This shows that after the initial period of frustration, he took active steps to cope with the difficulties that he encountered and tried to bring his anxiety as well as the whole situation under control. However, as he suggested in the above statement, making psychological and behavioural adjustment was a long process for him.

Two points can be made at this stage. The first one is to point out the proof for the assumption made earlier about the willingness he had in socialising and establishing friendships with Chinese people. It becomes evident through the above examples that it was not a lack of willingness, but a lack of opportunities as well as intercultural communicative competence that prohibited him from having satisfactory relationships and successful communication with host members. Further proof for this can be seen from his retrospection on the work experience, where he hinted that anxiety was an obstacle to his interactions with host members, in his words: "If I had that sort of opportunity...that situation...*I'd try to resolve it myself rather than leave it as two groups, standing separate from each other, not trying to talk to each other.*" (InterviewNote-2:14) This indicates a growth both in understanding of intercultural communication and in confidence. The second point is that the effort that he made in managing his situations, i.e., to make friendships and to learn from them their culture, indicates a progress both in terms of *savoir être* and *savoir apprendre/faire*, as it requires the determination as well as the skills to make necessary adaptive changes so as to be able to engage with and to mediate between different ways of thinking and behaving.

I have explored in the above discussion the links between his emotional state and his management of intercultural communication from the perspective of culture shock so as to build up a picture of how he coped with his sojourn experience. Although emotional difficulties could be the cumulative result of various factors, including personal traits, which play a key role in psychological issues, nonetheless, as the above discussion clearly indicates, the difficulties that he experienced in cross-cultural communication were a significant contributing factor to his emotional discomfort. His complaints about the defensive attitude, suspicion, and impoliteness of his Chinese interlocutors suggest that his expectations were not fulfilled, which could possibly be partly due to misinterpretations of meanings.

What I mean is that he may be absolutely right about the ways some of his Chinese interlocutors behaved. Indeed, there were occasionally complaints from our students about being treated unfriendlily or with racial abuse by some Chinese people. But the problem is whether it was also the case that he could not accurately interpret the intentions and meanings of his Chinese interlocutors, and was thus unable to communicate effectively with them. Let's go back for a moment to a comment that I quoted earlier, where he said: "it would help to start better friendships if *they were more polite*". But what is regarded as polite behaviour is not universal. For example, to be polite to their interlocutors, Chinese people may not express their refusals directly, which is not only confusing for, but may also appear to be lack of candour to an outsider. So, there is a likelihood of misperceptions. His comment appears to be a dispositional, character-based evaluation of the others and shows an attitude that is somewhat withdrawn. This indicates that, at least in the first half of his sojourn, he was relying a lot on his own cultural frame of reference to evaluate the social situations. Similarly, in the first questionnaire, when being asked what made it difficult to start friendships with Chinese people, he gave two accounts: one is that they "either fear of the unknown or xenophobia" (QI-No.10), and the other is that "their idea of an evening entertainment is very different from my own". Again, it is not that what he said lacks truth, but how he perceived the differences does suggest that his problems to some extent lay in incapacity to decentre. His remarks suggest that at the early stage, as far as the data tell, he was not highly aware of his self biased views, and had some difficulties to empathise with different perceptions and practices. Consequently, he felt frustrated and demoralised.

It becomes apparent through this lengthy discussion that deficiency in competence was a major cause of the informant's anxiety, which had obvious negative impact on his perceptions of and interactions with host members. Also, the data shows that despite his willingness, the informant had some difficulties to shift perspectives in communication with his Chinese interlocutors. In the following, I will focus on the issue of his understanding of the host culture, and its impact on his interactions with it.

To start with, there is clear evidence that he could tell some differences between his culture and Chinese culture in terms of communication styles, and was able to identify some main features of the ways that Chinese people communicate. In the first questionnaire he stated that the way that Chinese people communicate was more

ambiguous than that of his own culture, and when being asked later in the interview how it affected him in his communication with Chinese people, he replied as follows:

> I sometimes felt…again it depending on the person, the…context of our relationship, and how well I knew them. Some people whom I didn't know as well as close friends…were beating around the bush, but they wouldn't directly ask a question, and they would…gently introduce it, uh…which I felt…um it took of a lot of time…when…it could be...could have been…asked directly. And I wouldn't mind it, but…I...I accepted and understood that it is a cultural difference. And…I had no ill feeling about it, but…I did feel that…conversations sometimes could be long-winded. And everything is done very sensitively and very defensively. (InterviewNote-2:3)

There are several points that are worth noticing here. First, he had some good ideas about when and how ambiguity occurs in a Chinese communication context, and was able to relate it to the indirect means of communication that characterises Chinese communication style, showing an awareness of a difference between the cultures. Secondly, he stated clearly that although for him "*beating around the bush"* and "*gently introduce [a request]*" would take longer than necessary in delivering messages he nevertheless understood it to be a cultural difference and was therefore willing to accept it. However, a sense of uneasiness can be detected from the last sentence, where he described such a situation as *everything is done very sensitively and very defensively*, a point that I will return to shortly. Furthermore, he implicitly related the application of indirect behaviour in social interactions to the concern in the host culture for social harmony in interpersonal relationships, a point that can be seen more evidently in the following account:

> ...with people whom you don't know well, it would be more ambiguous, whereas with friends more direct. Because they … I think, they realise that they cannot ask in such a way, and… and I don't know whether it is to do with people's thinking that it might cause offence or with the nature of language. (InterviewNote-2:4)

Here, in response to the view put by Informant B, which linked ambiguity with the linguistic characteristics of Chinese language, he pointed out the close relationships between ambiguity, indirect communication style, and the value preference for a harmonious atmosphere in social interactions, i.e., *not causing offence* to others, where a connection to the concept of *face* was also made very briefly, as shown below. His accounts show a degree of awareness of the fact that Chinese people have different interpretations of the indirect way of communication.

He claimed that he had no problems in finding out people's real intentions behind the apparently ambiguous messages, and according to him, "*it just...requires... patience*

and time to come to accept that the culture is different" (InterviewNote-2:4). He believed that patience and good listening skills are essential to resolve problems caused by cultural difference, the following remark can illustrate this:

> Well, despite the ambiguity, eventually conversation would come around to the real intentions. Initial ambiguity may give way to true…the true meaning and…pointing to the thing to get round to. So the problem of ambiguity would be bypassed just by time, and just…waiting for…the point…the silent point, which would leap out from the rest of the statement they would be making, and at least, I hope. I interpreted their, their intention from this. (InterviewNote-2:6)

Apparently, he was aware that with the indirect way of communication he had to work out "the silent point" in implicit messages, and that, as he acknowledged, takes time as well as patience to get used to. When he was asked if he would do anything to press for clarifications, in other words, in a way to negotiate meanings if the message was ambiguous to him, he replied: "No, no, I'd wait for them. *I'd be trying to wait for them to make a more stressed or forced point, and then try to deduce the real intention.*" Clearly, he put a lot of emphasis on the skills of listening and practising patience, which, no doubt, are essential for good communications. But it appears that he did not pay equal attention to skills of negotiation of meanings or active discovery of different perspectives, which are just as important, if not more important, to good communication, especially when there is a need to resolve differences or conflicting views.

The point is, although careful listening is essential, it alone does not necessarily lead to accurate understanding of others' meanings. That is to say, without having some good insights into the cultural frame of reference that underlies others' behaviours, interpretation is likely to be self biased, thus risk the danger of misinterpreting the other's meanings and intentions. So, there is a possibility that he might have a false confidence in terms of understanding his Chinese interlocutors. The comment that is shown above on indirect behaviours – *everything is done very sensitively and very defensively* – might be viewed quite differently from his interlocutors' perspectives.

As for whether he would take an indirect approach himself in interacting with host members, he stated that if he felt no danger in causing any offence he would prefer a direct approach, but if in doubt, he would hold back actions, in his words: "if I felt that they [questions] would be offensive... or in any way, could be taken offensively, I would… I … wouldn't ask them." (InterviewNote-2:3) Again, he appeared to put emphasis mainly on being cautious in taking actions, but not so much on mediation of

differences. What seem to be missing are the skills to negotiate mutually accepted grounds for interactions, so it is natural for him to feel it difficult to interact effectively.

The main strategy that he adopted, as the examples show, was being polite and conflict avoidance. This includes a willingness to be flexible and a keen awareness of the need for showing sensitivity to cultural differences. In the interview, Informant B made the point that out of the consideration for fairness in a multicultural workplace, the same approach should be applied to everyone in handling potentially difficult situations, such as how to deliver the message to people of different cultural background, who made a mistake in their work. In responding to this, Informant C said:

> I agree that double standards can't be … kept. But, one has to be appreciative of the fact that you don't want to offend anyone in any case. So the same standards have to be kept for both parties, be Chinese or expats, and just kept in the same way, but should not cause offence, or embarrassment… lost face. (InterviewNote-2:14)

It is quite evident that he was prepared to take cultural differences into consideration and to be more accommodating. He suggested that the concept of *face* or fear of *losing face* in Chinese culture could be a potential cause of dysfunctions, thus had to be deal with very carefully, in a manner that is "private rather than public...public humiliation…um a private quiet words in their ear, as it were…". (InterviewNote-2:14)

This further proves the point that generally he held a positive attitude towards socialisation with host members. The less positive sentiments that was mentioned earlier, i.e., complaints of the impoliteness and unaccommodating attitudes of some host members, can be seen as reflections of his frustration of not being able to communicate effectively. In so far as the indirect way of communication is concerned, although he was able to recognise its social significance and some of its features, and was willing to accept it, he did not seem to be able to convey his intentions and meanings effectively.

Another social phenomenon that he observed in the host culture is the practice of *guanxi* in social life. He recognised that *guanxi* plays a very important role in Chinese society (QII-No.3), and shared with Informant B the view that *guanxi* means a personal relationship that entails both giving and taking favours or being mutually beneficial to the parties concerned. Like the others, he did not think this practice to be unique to China, but admitted that the difference is that elsewhere "it may be not in such a great scale as it does in China." (InterviewNote-2:10) Similarly, he also shared the view with Informant B that understanding this social practice is very important for a foreigner who

works in China, as, without *guanxi*, it means, in his words, "more taxing to get business done" (InterviewNote-2:9). Personally, he had no problems accepting this social norm.

In addition to *guanxi* and indirect communication style, he suggested that it is useful to learn a bit of Chinese history and traditional Chinese values, which, he believed, would help one to appreciate better present society and social life, such as extensive bureaucracy, the work ethics, etc. In his view, a basic grasp of the philosophic ideas of Legalism (a school of philosophy in ancient China at around first century AD) in Chinese history, "whose emphasis is on law and order, following the book... and rules in the book to the letter… and exact… exact punctuality, and so on." (InterviewNote-2:9) would help to explain the prevalence of bureaucracy in present China. According to him, a little bit of knowledge of the traditional values and beliefs, such as Confucianism, Legalism, etc., the ancient wisdom that played very important roles in shaping the culture, would help one to have better appreciation of some social practices like doing business deals at dinner table, heavy bureaucracy at various levels of organisations and so on. These show his recognition of the importance of understanding the basic value structure of a culture and that he was trying to relate what he had learnt from books to what he observed from his own personal experience.

Furthermore, he emphasised the importance of learning the social protocols of the host culture and cited a few examples of differences between the cultures such as table manners, courtesy to guests, code of receiving business card, etc. He believed it important to be able to get the "little things" right. This is an unmistakeable sigh of willingness to make behavioural adaptations. He also suggested that it would be useful to include in the further learning some information about appropriate behaviours in various cross-cultural social interactive circumstances, such as cross-cultural business encounters, etc. or whether it would be appropriate to treat a foreign delegation with their own customs or that of the host culture, again, a sign of willingness to make adaptive changes. At the same time, his suggestion reveals the difficulty that often puzzles people who communicate across cultures: how to adapt to the social situations when the two sides know very little about what to expect of each other.

From the above discussion of his understanding of the host culture it can be said that cognitively he gained some clear understanding of the host culture, and affectively there is an willingness to make adaptive changes. It provides further insights into his competence development. Firstly, through observation and interactions, he gained some

good insights into the host culture both in terms of behaviours and worldviews, especially with regard to communication style. His understanding of the host culture enabled him to be aware of how cross-cultural encounters would be affected by the differences between the cultures. Secondly, it becomes evident that he was very interested in learning the host culture, the language, the customs, its history, and the society, etc., and was willing to follow the social protocols of the host society. These are clear hints of a preparedness to make adaptive changes, which was not evident in the earlier part of the analysis.

Thirdly, this evidence provides further support for the argument that the difficulty that he experienced was largely due to lack of the skills to mediate between differences and insufficient self cultural awareness, though personality must also be an important factor, impacting on cultural empathy, open-mindedness, emotional stability, and flexibility (Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee, 2002:680-1). Based on this understanding it is reasonable to believe that the indirect communication style was one of the main causes of his difficulties in socialising with host members. This kind of communication relies heavily on shared presumptions, and thus a great deal of information is not verbally transmitted in the process of communication, typical of high-context communication, so it is obviously very hard for an outsider to make accurate interpretations of others' meanings and intentions. His emphasis on waiting for the 'more stressed point' and 'deduce the real intentions' in such a cultural context is thus a strategy that is risky of misinterpretation and/or disappointment.

Now I can summarise the whole discussion first from the perspective of the ICC model. In terms of *savoir être*, in addition to what was said earlier, there was also the evidence of willingness to learn from his Chinese interlocutors their views and perspectives. Yet, there seems to be a degree of absence, even by the time when the interview was made, of openness and being non-judgemental to differences, which, as I have suggested, is basically due to insufficient knowledge and skills. So in regard to *savoirs*, further development is needed both in terms of awareness of cultural identity related issues, such as attribution errors, and in terms of differences in cultural perspectives, especially in regard to self-other relationships. But it is shown clearly in the discussion that he was keenly aware of some of the causes of miscommunication. Also, he acquired a considerable knowledge of the host culture, ranging from social norms, social structures, to social behaviours and their underlying values and beliefs, which obviously would facilitate communication with host members. As for *savoir*

comprendre, apart from what has been said earlier about his being able to identify some causes of social dysfunctions, there is also some evidence that he was able to identify some differences in social practice and to relate them to different cultural perspectives. On the other hand, he did not appear to be very aware of some self-biased views in his perceptions of different behaviours. In terms of *savoir apprendre/faire*, in addition to the presence of the skills such as employing polite strategy, listening skills, etc., there is also the tendency of his making some adaptive changes, especially in taking steps to build up friendships. Although there is no clear evidence that he was able to elicit from host members their perspectives, yet from the simple fact that he was able to give clear accounts of some social protocols in the host culture, and that he acknowledged the importance of host friends as sources of information, saying that "if you have good Chinese friends, you can always ask them and learn from them" (InterviewNote-2:13), it can be assumed that he was able to exchange views and information with host members. But as I have pointed out, more effort seems to be needed in developing the skills to discover different perspectives and negotiate mutually accepted grounds with culturally different others.

To interpret these from the perspective of intercultural sensitivity development, further to what has been said already, there can be seen a development both in terms of understanding of the host culture and making adaptive changes. He appeared to be able to explain some social phenomena from the perspective of the host culture, and there is also evidence of his empathising with different ways of perceiving the world reality when he suggested that cultural difference had to be taken into consideration even if it is desirable to apply the same standard to different cultures. His accounts of *guanxi*, *face*, indirect communication, etc. indicate an increased sensitivity to the cultural differences. Also, the efforts that he took to establish friendships and to follow some social protocols are clear development in terms of behavioural adaptations. These are clear signs of development into the stage of *adaptation*. However, the presence of negative stereotyping and generalisation suggest that further development is necessary in understanding the host culture and in raising cultural awareness, especially self cultural awareness to reach full *adaptation*.

This case analysis highlights the following in terms of intercultural competence development:

- Relationship with host members appears to be an important factor in influencing his management of intercultural anxiety.

- Indirect communication style and the construct of *face* appear to be challenging to his management of cross-cultural relationships and interactions.
- Attribution errors seem to be part of the cause of his unsatisfactory relationships with some host members.
- The application of conflict avoidance strategy did not always lead to desired outcomes of social interaction or satisfactory relationships. This implies the importance of skills to negotiate differences for mutual satisfaction.
- Personality and host culture reception appeared to be factors that had significant influence on adaptation to the new cultural environment.

With regard to the application of the two models for analysis, again, from different perspectives, they point in the same direction, i.e., further development is needed before the informant is to be able to handle intercultural interaction effectively and appropriately. But in terms of how to make improvements, the two models offer different approaches. That is, the sensitivity model focuses on understanding the different perspectives so as to reduce stereotyping, while the ICC model put emphasis on developing the skills to solve differences. So another point can be added to the previous comments at the end of the analysis of Informant A:

- Operating on the basis of sensitivity to different worldviews, the intercultural sensitivity model does not have the capacity to distinguish precisely the nature of competence deficiency, such as the skills for discovery or negotiation of cultural differences.

Individual Profile – Informant D

Informant D participated in the second questionnaire and the interview, and on both occasions she appeared to be positive about her experience. Her general view is that her work experience in China resulted in considerable change in her perceptions of the social, economic and political environment of the society, her understanding of the culture, as well as her perception of cross-cultural communication. She considered the work experience to be valuable, because, in her words, "it has improved my language skills and helped me understand Chinese culture and society better." (QII-No.7)

The information generated from the questionnaire and the interview seems to suggest that the informant was deeply involved in social interactions with host members both in her workplace and elsewhere, and enjoyed satisfactory relationships with them. The data suggest that both she and her Chinese interlocutors showed an appreciation for

the cultural differences between them, and thus had few problems in accepting differences in views and behaviours. As one can find from examples, cultural differences were sometimes regarded as interesting inspirations rather than impassable barriers to communication, therefore she did not perceive it to be a threat to her relationships and interactions with host members. There is clear evidence of willingness, not only on her part, but also on the part of her interlocutors, to socialise and exchange views on various topics.

To begin with, she held the view that she was expected to behave differently by her Chinese friends and colleagues, and therefore there were no problems for them to accept her ways of thinking and behaving. For instance, in replying to the question of whether she would feel free to discuss any topics with her Chinese friends, she had this to say:

> Yeah, and I mean... I think it's always understood... that my views were slightly different. I always knew that... they came from China and I came from England, so... they knew that we were always going to have different ideas about things. But that was never a problem. It was just a part of... it was just more interesting... rather than... being a problem. (InterviewNote-3:8)

Clearly, she did not think the differences between them blocked their communication since it is accepted by both parties that there would always be different views between them. On the contrary, she held the view that their recognition and appreciation of the differences enabled them to see beyond their different views and overcome potential difficulties. Here cultural difference was described as an *interesting* encountering rather than a *problem,* which is a clear sign of satisfaction with their interactions. Moreover, as can be seen from the quotation, she was aware that difference was expected by both sides to be the norm of cross-cultural communications.

It seems clear here that she related the ability to resolve cultural differences to both the expectations of each other in a communication and their willingness to accept the differences. As her description of the social interactions with her Chinese friends showed above, there seems to be, on the part of all those involved, a degree of awareness of the nature of intercultural communication on the one hand, i.e., the expectation for different views and behaviours of the others; and a willingness to accept otherness and to cooperate with each other in socialisations on the other hand. This suggests two things. One is that the social atmosphere of her communications with the host members was presumably friendly and cooperative, and consequently less anxiety

inducing; and the other is that she had the awareness and abilities to manage intercultural relationships and to communicate with host members.

Referring to her social interactions at the workplace, she stated that although she was not very sure of what her Chinese colleagues would have expected of her in terms of behaviour (QII-No.7) she did feel that she was expected to "do strange things" as a foreigner, as she explained:

> Ah, right… it didn't… after a while it didn't bother me not knowing what they expected of us. Um… this is specifically with regard to work, because after a while, after a few weeks, I found out that they just… I was a foreigner, so they expected me to do strange things all the time anyway. They didn't expect to understand why I said and did what I did. And they just liked me as a friend… even though we have different ways of doing work, or getting things done. So at first, it was a bit strange, not knowing… I would do it one way… and then… I didn't know whether they were displeased… or whether they just accepted that I just do something differently. (InterviewNote-3:1)

As far as this account shows, she did not give any emphasis to making adaptive changes and it looks like there was little discussion between her and her Chinese colleagues about their work. All that was emphasised in her account here is the acceptance of differences. She realised that her way of getting things done was different from 'theirs', but believed that it was expected and was therefore not uncomfortable about it. This appears to have something to do with the social context that she was in, which I will discuss below. But with regard to relationships, she did not seem to think the cultural differences to be a big problem between her and her Chinese colleagues, in her words: "*they just like me as a friend*". This indicates that despite the differences they developed mutual satisfactory relationships and she felt accepted and understood.

One may notice that there seems to be little emphasis in the above account about communication as far as her work is concerned. This will be partly explained by the point that I am going to make below, but as I will show, with the development of friendship, she and her Chinese colleagues, to whatever degree, did exchange views on how and why they did what they did. But as our discussion so far shows, in general, she felt that both her Chinese friends and colleagues expected her to be different in views and behaviours, and presumably, the perception of being accepted this way made her feel more at ease in her relationships and interactions with them, and encouraged more positive attitudes towards the interactions. This is because such an atmosphere certainly could reduce the anxiety caused by the fear of rejection and discrimination (Stephan and Stephan, 1992). In accordance with what Furnham and Bochner proposed (1982), which

I mentioned in the previous case, that is, having close and sympathetic friends would result in fewer problems in adapting to the new cultural environment, it can be assumed that the positive reception she received encouraged both closer involvement and better learning.

On the other hand, to be successful in managing cross-cultural relationships there has to be the willingness and ability to engage with otherness and to communicate meanings effectively. I will show later that it is her positive attitude and possession of some essential intercultural communication skills that enabled her to manage well her work and socialisation across cultures. But, let's take a look at her workplace environment first.

According to her, the management style in her workplace was Western and there were more western staff than Chinese staff in the company (QII-No.7). This partly explains why she did not feel she was expected to make many behavioural changes. Clearly, in such circumstances it is not very likely that she would have strong feelings of misfit at work, and therefore the pressure to adapt to the host culture. It actually could be the other way round. In fact, one could sense this from what she said about her colleagues. For instance, she mentioned that in comparison with the relatively new staff, some of her Chinese colleagues were more westernised, and they often took a more direct approach in their communication with the management, an issue that I will deal with later. This from one perspective explains why she did not think the differences between her and her Chinese colleagues to be a problem at her workplace, as well as why she did not feel troubled not knowing what her Chinese colleagues expected of her.

It seems to be the case that as far as her work is concerned, there was little need for her to discuss or consult her Chinese colleagues, but as friends, she did sometimes get their views on how they perceived the differences between them, even if only to a limited extent. According to her, the exchange of views only started when friendship was established, as shown in the following account:

> Um... sometimes they'd tell me, but... when they were my friends. So then they would be more likely to say: Oh, we do it like this, but it is really interesting that you've done it differently, or you've said something differently. But most of the time… they didn't say much. I think it is because the person in charge, the highest person in charge was Western, well, Australian, so that's the person who told me what to do, and everyone that I was with was just on my level, or did… or had a slightly different job. So… they didn't feel they had to tell me: you must do it like this. (InterviewNote-3:1)

Her description of the work environment shows clearly the point mentioned above, that is, due to the cultural context, there was not a great demand for her to make cultural adjustments at her workplace, and therefore she would not be too anxious about not being understood or approved by her Chinese colleagues. On the other hand however, there is some evidence here that she was able to manage well her relationships and, to some degree, communications with her Chinese colleagues. As friendship has to be built on mutual trust, respect, and understanding, it is inconceivable to think that she would be able to build up friendships without being sensitive to the important differences between her and her friends, and without being able to accommodate the differences. This means that she must have had some knowledge and skills to convey to her Chinese interlocutors her intentions as well as to perceive accurately their expectations and intentions.

According to her, she had Chinese friends both from her workplace and from universities, and in general, she found communication not a problem, expressing confidently that "*I never found it difficult to talk to my Chinese friends*" and "*I could ask them about... anything*" (InterviewNote-3:8). But because of the different interests and life styles of those friends, she found she socialised with them in somewhat different ways and had different topics of conversation. There are some examples of how she socialised with them from the following account:

> Um… in terms of socializing with people from my work, it is OK, because… they were quite westernized, they were very… the young girls I worked with were very into Western fashion, and they would go out to have a cup of… beer in the bar in the evening… But certainly the friends I made in the university… um the girls didn't drink beer, even just if we sat outside, just had one beer… they'd feel… that was bit…unusual. We would have to do something constructive, we would have to be learning or practicing or… We never really just sat and just talked about boyfriends. The girls were always sort of… talking something related to study or… interesting concepts. Um… and obviously most of my friends in university had a lot less money than I did, even though I am only a student. But because I was in China, what to me it wasn't a lot of money in England it is obviously a lot of money in China. And… and in that case it was hard, because I… we can't… always… we can't go and get a cup of coffee or do… what I did. Um… and I talked to them... um as what they normally do. And normally… they would normally sit in their rooms and drink tea and chat, which is fine, but… it meant I couldn't get to know them the same way I would know my Western friends by going and doing something together. (InterviewNote-3:8)

From this lengthy description one can see that she was able to take into consideration the needs and concerns of her friends and socialised with them accordingly. With her friends from work she socialised in a "*Western fashion*" by going out to have a drink and chat, which she obviously felt more comfortable with. But with

her university friends, she realised that what she considered a normal life style was alien to them and also beyond their means. Apart from that, the topics that they would enjoy were related more to their learning. As she indicated, she adopted their way of socialising instead of having her way: going out for coffee or beer together. This example shows that she was rather sensitive to the concerns of the other party and was consciously making adaptive changes. This from one angle answers why she did not find communication a problem.

Her awareness of the differences in communication style can provide from a different angle explanations of why she did not find it very hard to communicate with host members. She suggested that the difference between English and Chinese cultures is much greater than that between English and French, and thus "it would be far easier to offend a Chinese, or even, say a Japanese businessman, I would imagine, than a French one." (InterviewNote-3:6) According to her, it was much more head-to-head in the West, but in contrast, a "more soft approach" had to be adopted in interactions with Chinese people in order to avoid misunderstandings or causing any offence. So, in her opinion, one has to be mindful that "perhaps doing things takes longer in Chinese way, *because you don't want to appear to be too abrupt, or too demanding. You have to be more subtle about how you phrase... the quest, so as not to make the other side feel as if you... were... superior or trying to be... superior.*" (InterviewNote-3:6) Here it shows that she had some good ideas of the differences between the cultures in communication style and was aware of the likely perceptions host members could have about the 'head-to-head style of communication'. Seeing that she was able to understand the impact of the cultural differences on the cross-cultural communication, it is easier to understand why she was able to manage relationships and communication with host members. Thus, apart from the relative cooperative environment, she appeared to have made good efforts to understand and to adapt to her new environment.

It appears that she and her Chinese friends were able to handle well their differences when encountering topics about which they each had their own views, especially some issues that were regarded as sensitive by many Chinese people, such as Tibet or Taiwan. For instance she travelled to Tibet, and when she discussed with her Chinese friends about it she found that they had quite different views. However, according to her, although they could not see eye to eye on these issues and each side was keen to make their views clear to the other, they did not take the differences at personal level; rather, the differences were treated as Western views vs. Chinese ones,

and both sides were able to show understanding of and tolerance to the differences. The following example gives some clues of how they managed with conflict views in their conversations:

> Um… they didn't… really argue as much, they weren't very… confrontational, there was more sort of OK, change the subject a bit more so you would be… um… Sometimes maybe I said: Oh well, we think it is like this in the West, or we have this opinion on... or I have this opinion, which is normal in the West of, say… the question of Taiwan or something. And they would say: well, no, but this is how it is. And you'd say well, don't you think… and they would go, no, this is how it is. And you might say but don't you think it maybe… No, no, this is the way it is. So sometimes it was a bit… in that sense. But I think they just thought or knew that I had different views, it wasn't that … they had a problem… with me having different views. They just knew about that westerners have different views. (InterviewNote-3:8-9)

From this example we can see that both she and her Chinese friends were trying to present their own views and neither appeared to be persuaded by the other side, but at the same time they were able to resort to rational talks and to avoid confrontations. What is significant in this are their abilities to manage the sensitivity of these issues without hurting each other's feelings and to maintain cooperation in their social interactions, indicating their mutual trust and respect, as well as their open-mindedness to differences, which enabled them to make more situational oriented attributions. It is obvious that even if they were not able to resolve their differences, by engaging in negotiations between the differences they were able to elicit the other side's views and thus to have better understanding of the different perspectives.

I would think that their ability to handle the potential conflicts has something to do with their expectations of each other. I mean, it is closely related to their positive attitudes towards differences. As shown above, she felt that she was expected by her friends to be different, and presumably, that also reflected and affected her attitudes to the differences. The assumption is that in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance and support, self perceptions will not be under threat, and as suggested earlier, a positive social environment helps to reduce anxiety and encourage interactions and cooperation (Stephan and Stephan, 1992). What is significant is that she described differences to be interesting rather than threatening, and also claimed having no problems to talk to her Chinese friends despite their differences. There seems to be a clear link between the tolerant social atmosphere they together created and the positive attitudes and better involvement in social interactions, and conversely, it is the positive attitudes and skills

to communicate that enabled them to socialise effectively, and further improved the social atmosphere.

So far the discussion shows that in terms of attitude, the informant demonstrated a tolerance for ambiguity, open-mindedness, flexibility, and willingness to socialise and make friends with host members; in terms of cognitive understanding, she showed a clear understanding of the differences in communication styles, an awareness of some causes of miscommunication, a tendency to be more situational oriented in meaning attributions, and some insights into the different ways of life; and in terms of behaviour, there are indications of mediating between the cultural differences and being mindful in dealing with otherness. She appeared to be very capable in managing relationships and communication, particularly in handling potential conflicts.

To understand these in terms of ICC competence, in terms of *savoir être*, there is some evidence for being willing and prepared to engage with otherness and to participate in social interactions, and a degree of interest in discovering different perspectives. As for *savoirs*, there is clear evidence that she gained good understanding in terms of views and beliefs from the perspective of the host culture, of some social and socioeconomic conditions that affected behaviours in the host society, as well as knowledge of communication, especially a keen awareness of the danger of miscommunication and some knowledge about how to avoid it. In the aspect of *savoir apprendre/faire*, there are clear indications of such skills as management of anxiety and ambiguity, negotiation of meanings and mediation between the differences, and conveyance of meanings and intentions to others. In terms of *savoir comprendre*, although there is not sufficient evidence available so far in regard to her understanding the other's perspectives in meaning interpretations, it seems that she was trying to relate others' behaviours to the social contexts that they were in, and as I have suggested, there is clearly the tendency of being able to make less dispositional oriented attributions. This signals a development into the *adaptation* stage in terms of intercultural sensitivity development, as attempts are made to understand differences from a wider perspective rather than one's own worldviews.

Having seen how she socialised with host members, the next question is how she perceived the differences between the cultures. First, she noticed that indirect means of communication is often employed by Chinese people to avoid potential conflicts or tensions in social interactions. Earlier I showed her comment on the non-confrontational

approach of her Chinese friends in dealing with their differences. She observed that in order to avoid getting into conflicts, they tended to change the subject of their conversations instead of confronting the differences directly, a view that is also stated by Informant A. As will be shown in the following discussion, through her experience in China, especially her work experience she was able to see more deeply into this behavioural trait, and to understand its relationships with some value differences between the cultures and its impact on intercultural interactions, such as how it is related to the attitude of the host culture towards authority, and how it affected work efficiency, etc.

In the following she gave an example of how some of her Chinese colleague communicated with their boss. When asked if she had observed any differences between the cultures in terms of work-related behaviours, she said:

> Yes. I think the Chinese staff would never question… they never questioned… anything if they were told to do something. They rarely questioned why um… Sometimes they would know if they were asked to do something, perhaps on computer or telephone someone, and they knew that there were some reasons that they couldn't do this, or it had already done, or it should do in a different way, but they rarely would question directly, or say immediately: *Oh, I've done it already, or… it should be done… so and so had told me it should be done like this.* They might wait a bit, and came back in half an hour and say: Oh, I can't do it like this. Or… they didn't question… especially, I think, because the boss was Western… editor, so they didn't question her directly. But some of the staff was much more westernised… they were much more used to working with this Australian boss, and they were completely different. They were much more sort of *I don't think I should do it like that…* more like that… (InterviewNote-3:2)

Her point is clear: there are differences between what is roughly defined by her as 'Western' culture vs. Chinese culture in regard to work-related behaviours, that is, Chinese people in general have more respect for authority and tend to be far less direct in their communication, especially with their superior. She illustrated this point through the comparison between the *more westernised* Chinese staff, who would express their views to the boss in a more straightforward manner with those not so *westernised* ones, who would deal with problems in a far less straightforward fashion and would not question their boss.

There can be seen in her description a clear link between the indirect behaviours and the concept of power distance and authority in the culture. Instead of directly expressing their views to the boss, some of her Chinese colleagues chose to wait for a while before gently voicing their different views or did not question the authority at all. She associated this kind of behaviour with the concepts of power relationships, or

respectful of the authority in the culture, saying: "*some of those who had been there for a long time were more Western in their attitude, or they would be more used to the... working with this Australian boss. While some of the newer ones were very much... more respectful of the authority... and much... less likely to challenge or question... the boss about what they had to do.*" (InterviewNote-3:3) Here she made a contrast between the Western and Chinese cultures regarding attitude and behaviours towards authority, but as I will show next, apart from the work-related behaviours, she could also see other aspects of social life that is affected by the concept of power and authority in Chinese society, i.e., the relationships between the teacher and the student, between the general public and the political power, etc.

She discovered from her Chinese friends that their attitudes towards the teacher were different from hers. She said, for her friends, "the teacher was always right, and they would always respect what the teacher said" (InterviewNote-3:10), because in the eyes of her friends their teachers were "much learnt" (InterviewNote-3:10) persons. She made a comparison of the different attitudes between the cultures, saying: "in England we have a much more equal…with our teachers and professors we tend to be more at an equal level, more talking and discussion… questioning", while in contrast, for her Chinese friends, "it's very much the teacher… was the teacher… who told you… what you had to learn. They were much more respectful… or more wary perhaps… of authority." (InterviewNote-3:3) Similarly, through her eyes we can see that this attitude towards power is also reflected in the political life in China. She described what she observed from her friends:

> ... Some of my friends, close friends didn't… they didn't question the authority of the newspapers, or the government, or the police. There was never any. Um… they might, maybe the teachers, the parents, more and more younger people would… say, I think compared to 30 years ago in China young people are Westernised in their ideas. But with regards to the authority of the newspapers to say things, the police to… to do things, or the government… there was no questioning. They never doubted it or… when we had private discussion about things, and that's it. (InterviewNote-3:3)

While indicating that the society, especially the younger generation has been more open to Western ideas, she could still see that in regard to power relationships, the traditional values are as strong as ever, and Chinese people are comparatively less likely to question or challenge authorities, which, shown by the examples, include teachers, government, police, and media. The data show that she could identify some important

differences between the cultures both in terms of communication styles and the underlying values of behaviours.

She also identified the relationship between these conceptual and behavioural characteristics with the bureaucratic system and inefficiency in some public services. Because of the concept of power relationships in the culture people at the lower levels of power structure would only act upon the instructions from their superiors instead of taking responsibilities themselves, therefore sometimes what would be a simple matter may take a long time to sort out. She described what would happen: "everything has to be checked by someone. And… very few people want to take responsibility… for making a decision, or tell you a fact. If you go for a visa office, they don't want to be the one who says you must do it like this, because then they don't want to get into trouble. It was very much… everyone had to ask someone else, and they would then go and ask somebody else ..." (InterviewNote-3:5), and consequently there would be a lot of ambiguity and uncertainty in communication. She thus tried to relate the apparent social phenomena with their underlying belief system, and was able to take into account the perspectives of the host culture in her explanations of those social phenomena. Here one can see clearly the development in terms of *savoirs* and *savoir comprendre*.

Although she was unequivocal about the indirectness that characterised the way communication is conducted in Chinese culture, she also noted the directness of her Chinese friends in their approach to privacy. It was clear to her that they had different ideas about what she would regard as personal issues. In her words, things such as "boyfriends or… just… um drinking or anything what we did… um… they tended to be more direct, whilst we might be a bit more subtle about asking a question like this… or may be trying to work out whether it is appropriate." (InterviewNote-3:9) This apparent contradiction reflects the attitudes in the culture towards privacy, and it is a common feeling among many of the students that privacy is less valued or respected in Chinese culture than in Western cultures.

Her response to this difference is acceptance and understanding. On the personal level, she stated that she did not feel offended by personal questions, "because we were good friends, it wasn't out of place" (InterviewNote-3:9). While on the perceptual level, she was obviously trying to find explanations for the behavioural difference from the socioeconomic perspective, as can be seen from the following:

> And there are a lot of poor… much poorer people in China, and a whole family live in a small house, so you grow up being far more used to be surrounded

> by people... Whist we were used to living with… a big house, everybody has their own bedroom… So we're used to always having our own, even it is just a very small bedroom… you have your own space. Whereas the Chinese friends I had… you know, sometimes they shared a room with the cousin… or they all had a main room. And at the university, obviously they would share... for five or six to a room, because it is not financially possible… for people to have… just two people in a room. …… They were… because like… some of my friends, they weren't used to having their own personal space, so they didn't expect you to… (InterviewNote-3:9)

Earlier I made the point that she tended to avoid making dispositional attributions, and here again one can see her attempt to understand the difference from the perspective of social contexts and to view the situation from the perspective of her interlocutors instead of relying on her own cultural frame of reference. From her comment that "*they weren't used to having their own personal space, so they didn't expect you to...*" one can see the sign of decentring, i.e., trying to take into account how and why others perceived the world reality. In terms of ICC competence, apart from what has been said already, an evidence of shifting of perspectives in meaning interpretations can be found here, signifying aspects of development in *savoir être*, *savoirs* and *savoir comprendre*.

Apart from the indirectness in communication and the comparatively larger power distance, she also recognised the importance of *guanxi* in social relationships and work-related activities in the Chinese society. She made the point in the second questionnaire that *guanxi* plays an important role in Chinese culture, and gave a more detailed explanation later in the interview of how it works and why it is important (QII-No.7). In regard to how this difference will affect an outsider working in China, she said:

> I think maybe if they didn't realize the importance of *guanxi*, the importance of doing favouritism, and knowing someone, they maybe have hard time… cos they wouldn't know that they could ask for favours, but they also wouldn't know to give favours, to be more accommodating to the people's requests. Um… that might affect on how to do business. (InterviewNote-3:7)

Like the other informants, she was very much aware of the importance of *guanxi* in the functions of the society and its impact on cross-cultural interactions. As the data show, she was clear that without being aware of this, an outsider would have difficulties to work or live in China. She was able to see how this social practice works as a mutual beneficial mechanism for the parties involved, i.e., *ask as well as give favours*. Her attitude towards it in general can be felt from her account where she described giving favours as "*more accommodating to the people's request*". She stated that in her work, which involved writing articles about hotels, restaurants, and music bands, etc. for a magazine, she had seen and been involved in giving and taking favours and had got used to this social practice. She described the situation as "we were all friends... we

would all help each other" (InterviewNote-3:7). On the other hand, she also showed an awareness of the other, perhaps the less constructive or desirable, aspect of this practice in some social circumstances, pointing out that "a lot of things were done through who you knew, rather than... your qualifications... You have to know someone, so you have to do favours for someone, who is perhaps an official." (InterviewNote-3:7) Although there was no further information about what her view was about it, the way she put it indicates that she was applying the value standards of fairness in her evaluations.

Again one can see development in *savoir* and *savoir comprendre*. In terms of *savoir être*, there shows clearly the willingness to engage with the different conventions and social norms.

She also noticed the family-oriented value and its impact on behaviours, including linguistic behaviours. She pointed out that Chinese culture "...is definitely more family-oriented... um... it is still much more of a more traditional society than that in England... and in that sense... there is more respect for the hierarchy and for the elder", so "people don't seem to question as much, or for younger people, there is more acceptance..." (InterviewNote-3:10). In her view, respect for power, i.e., seniority both in position and age, is related to the traditional family values and social order, which is based largely on the concept of hierarchy. According to her, this difference in value orientation is also reflected in the way that the language is used, and she gave an example of this, saying that in China "[T]he address system, of calling people by a title according to age or position is very prominent." (QII-No.7) Perhaps, based on the same understanding, she indicated that in case of a conflict of self interest and group interest, people are expected to place group interest before self interest in Chinese culture, while in her own culture this is a matter entirely up to the individual (QII-No.7). Implicitly though, there can be seen a perceptual distinction of the two cultures in terms of power distance and orientation towards collectivism/individualism.

With regard to business communication, apart from the indirect approach, she also observed that people tend to use more formal language in business context. In comparison with everyday use of the language the difference lies in that "[M]ore formality for business, different vocabulary, and more diplomatic, courteous and less frank speech." This clear description and other observations, such as the address codes mentioned above, imply an effort that goes beyond mere acceptance of differences. They are indications of close attention to behavioural details, which signals adaptive

effort. In general, she thought that the following aspects would be essential for the success of working with Chinese people – "diplomacy, friendliness, understanding of cultural traditions and habits, willingness to learn" (QII-No.7). From these one can see her emphasis on managing relationships, understanding different ways of thinking and behaving. In terms of ICC development, this provides further evidence of development in *savoirs* and *savoir apprendre/faire*.

In short, there is plenty of evidence of her interactions with host members and her development in understanding of the host culture as well as the nature of intercultural communication. Earlier, I summarised that she socialised effectively with host members and was able to mediate between differences. At that stage, there was little information about her understanding and views of the host culture. The subsequent discussion shows that through observation and communication with host members she gained good insights into the host culture, and her accounts show an understanding from behavioural features such as indirectness in communication and exchange favours in work, etc. to more deeply rooted concepts or beliefs such as respect for power and authority, face concerns, family oriented values, etc. More significantly, there is evidence of shifting perspectives in interpreting the differences, which suggests a development that goes beyond the level of *acceptance*.

Through the discussion, I have pointed out the evidence of development in all aspects of ICC competence except *savoir s'engager*. In regard to this, the informant was able to identify how some behaviours in the host culture were guided or affected by specific values/beliefs and social environment of the culture, and was able to negotiate with her Chinese interlocutors about the differences between them in terms of Western views vs. Chinese views. Apart from that, there is very little evidence that her evaluations of behaviours or events were made explicitly on the basis of critical understanding of the social reality from the perspective of fundamental human rights, except a hint that I pointed out above: her words about the tendency to favouritism in the practice of *guanxi* indicate the presence of the value of fairness in her judgement.

To look at the development as a whole from the perspective of intercultural sensitivity development, one can see a number of features that signify the development into *adaptation* stage. First, apart from the willingness to be open, flexible, and tolerant of differences, there is explicitly the readiness to discover new perspectives and to interact with host members with necessary adaptive changes, which distinguishes

adaptation from *acceptance*. Second, in regard to knowledge, there is evidence of both an understanding of the process of intercultural communication and some insights into the significant differences between the two cultures, such as communication styles, some fundamental values, etc. These in turn resulted in an appreciation of some work-related behavioural differences. Her ability to discover the links between different aspects of the culture, i.e., social phenomena, behaviours, and the less observable values and beliefs of the culture, shows a strong desire to learn, and a better appreciation of the differences in thinking and behaving, an ability to differentiate. It can thus be regarded as an indication of entering the stage of *adaptation*. Thirdly, there is clear presence of the skills for eliciting different perspectives and mediating between different views and meanings, and other skills to conduct effective communication, such as establishing rapport, demonstrating respect, etc. These again are indications of being into the stage of *adaptation*, signifying shifting perspectives in perception and social interaction.

This analysis shows that through the sojourn and work experience the informant gained good cultural awareness and insights into the host culture, especially with regard to communication styles. This case highlights a few aspects of the competence for intercultural communication, and these are:

- The importance of cultural awareness. The case shows that being aware of the nature of intercultural communication and having realistic expectations of self, others, and the outcomes of communication is crucial for positive attitudes, hence engagement with otherness.
- The importance of managing relationships. The case shows that once trust is established, it is possible to communicate at a deeper level, where differences can be accepted and understood. Moreover, a friendly atmosphere encourages better cultural learning and active engagement.
- The importance of being open and flexible. It appears that flexibility and openness are an important part of her competence in successfully managing relationships and interactions with others.

In regard to further development, there are two other points worth considering:

- A need for further development in language competence, i.e., register and cultural context, such as business discourse vs. that for everyday life.
- Possibly, a need for emphasising developing critical cultural awareness. The case bring to our attention the inevitability of encountering conflicting views and/or values in intercultural communication, and it is important that one

should be able to resolve conflicts or differences on a basis that is deeply rooted in the understanding of human rights.

Individual Profile – Informant E

Informant E participated in the second questionnaire survey and the interview. He was the last one of the group being interviewed, and by then I was just about to start the discussion of some topics on cross-cultural interactions in my business Chinese language class, and was anxious to get the interview done before the discussion really started. The interview focused predominantly on what he experienced in the workplace. This is because first of all his answers to the questionnaire indicate that he was quite aware of some cross-cultural differences in the workplace, and moreover, he appeared to have enjoyed the work experience in China. For instance, he was able to see that a Chinese colleague would not deal with a conflict in the same way as he would. While on the other hand, he was explicit that the work experience not only enabled him to gain better access to the host members and their culture, but might also be useful later for applying for jobs. The interview shows that apart from having some work experience with a multinational company, he was also involved in doing some coordination for the production of a video programme made by a Chinese educational organisation. As one can see from the following evidence, these experiences helped him to understand some of the issues involved in cross cultural communication and their implications for working across the cultures. These experiences also to some extent enabled him to have an opportunity to reflect on his own culture from a different perspective. As the examples given in the interview concern mostly what he observed in his workplace, it provides little information about the actual actions he took to interact with host members, but it nevertheless enables us to have very good idea of how effectively he communicated with them.

When he was in Beijing Informant E had some work experience with a local branch of the EAG (not real name) Bank, a multinational firm, where most of the staff was Chinese and his boss was a Chinese woman. The environment of the workplace enabled him to observe some behavioural differences between cultures, especially between his native culture and the host culture, and the communication he had with his Chinese colleagues enabled him to get some insights into how the differences were perceived from their perspectives. It appears that almost all the staff members were able

to communicate well in English, and this would help to create a more favourable condition for communication between them, since at that time the students had only studied Chinese for over one year and was very likely to have difficulties to communicate complicated ideas in Chinese. The atmosphere in the workplace was described in his questionnaire as harmonious and cooperative, and work efficiency was thought to be good. In his view, the fact that the staff had different cultural backgrounds did not have a negative impact on the work efficiency in his workplace, because: "working for a multi-national firm everyone is motivated" (QII-No.1). Personally he was happy to work with people whose culture was different from his own. From his perspective, he had met the expectations of his Chinese colleagues, because in his words: "They seem to be happy with my performance and praise me." (QII-No.1) In general, the questionnaire shows that he had a good level of satisfaction with this work experience.

One of the reasons that he gave for valuing the work experience was that "*it has enabled me to meet a different type of person, other than the students we regularly meet around campus.*" (QII-No.1) This from one perspective reveals his interest in socialising with various people in China and in understanding the society. He claimed that no extra effort was needed to establish a good relationship with the Chinese people he worked with, and I will show, he was able to communicate well with them and established good relationships with them as well. Given that he was aware of some of the cultural pitfalls in communication, which will be shown below, and that he acknowledged having encountered difficulties sometimes in knowing the real intentions of some Chinese speakers, his confidence in managing socialisation with his Chinese colleagues to some extent suggests that he was able to be both flexible in attitude and mindful in behaviour in dealing with the cultural differences. That is to say, he was likely to have a good level of tolerance for ambiguity and some necessary skills to handle difficult situations in communication with culturally different others.

The following example suggests that he was conscious of situational complexity of cross-cultural communication and was prepared to be flexible in handling difficult situations. In other words, he was quite aware of the uncertain nature of cross-cultural communication, and was thus rather relaxed about not knowing precisely what to do. In responding to the question of whether he would adopt a more indirect approach like many Chinese people would when working in China, he replied:

> … If I was working in China, I might just be more direct, because it's more natural to me, which, again, thinking of this as… is perhaps not be the good way to do it, but… You should think as it's in China you should use it, the indirect approach, *but it really…. It depends on the environment.* Also, if I was one Western person with a lot of Chinese people, there is a Chinese environment. But whilst there is a mixture of Chinese with a lot of Western people, you can't use either Chinese or Western…, specifically Chinese method or specifically Western method, you know. In… in that instance it is a very mixed environment and… and the Chinese way of doing it might not quite right. I… I don't know. If …*when that situation comes up, I have to think about it then.* I don't know. What would you recommend what to do? (InterviewNote-4:5)

Here one can see that he recognised the difficulties both in unlearning one's own cultural habits and in coping with unpredictable and complicated situations of cross-cultural communication, and was thus doubtful if there be any simple solution to this problem. His reply was thus rather cautious, placing emphasis on flexibility rather than behavioural adaptation. He showed an inclination to take a more flexible approach in handling unknown situations or "*a very mixed environment*", that is: "*when that situation comes up, I have to think about it then.*"

His tolerance for ambiguity and being flexible can also be found in another example. In the questionnaire he stated that he would not take the same action in pointing out a mistake by a Chinese colleague as he would with a co-national colleague (QII-No.1). He explained his reason in the interview:

> … I'm not sure how I would talk to a Chinese person, but perhaps I feel easier to talk to an expatriate, because I'm not sure what a Chinese person would expect of me. But I … I think in the West people are quite open about it, um… If you made a mistake, you get told that you made a mistake, and so, if you don't make the mistake again it's alright. I'm not sure how Chinese people would view that. (InterviewNote-4:2)

Despite his acknowledgement that it is more comfortable for him to act in a more direct manner, here when the context is clear he seemed to be prepared to adapt his behaviour somehow. He was uncertain about what action would be regarded as appropriate in the host culture in the given situation, but clearly he was cautious against acting in an ethnocentric manner. Here he suggested that Chinese people might have different ideas about what is appropriate in such a context, and although he did not suggest what action/s he would take to communicate with them, he did suggest that he would be more wary (Ibid). This once again suggests that he was aware of the danger of ethnocentrism and was rather mindful of his actions.

From these examples one can find that he was keenly aware of the fact that his behaviours might be mistaken or misinterpreted by his host members, and was prepared

to act with care so as to avoid misunderstandings or dysfunctions. As the data suggest, this has much to do with his understanding of the nature of intercultural communication. When asked what he would regard to be essential for working successfully with Chinese people, he replied: "*patience, understanding that they don't always look at problems in the same way as you.*" (QII-No.1) This demonstrates that he had a clear idea that ethnocentrism is a fundamental cause of many cross-cultural difficulties and was thus prepared to take actions to find out different perspectives. This can be seen as a clear indication that he had both the willingness to engage with otherness and awareness of the danger of insisting on having his own way of doing things.

While realising the importance of being patient and flexible, he was also aware of the fact that people do often have different expectations of outsiders from their in-groups. When discussing the implications of *guanxi* for managing relationships in China, he made the following comment: "I would say if you are going to go and work in China you have to understand it (*guanxi*). *But I think people would allow you ... because you ... people would allow you to get away because you are a foreigner.*" (InterviewNote-4:2) This might be another reason why he did not appear too anxious about not knowing exactly what actions to take in social interactions with host members. But as he said, it is necessary to understand another culture when you are in contact with it.

So far the discussion shows that although there is no evidence available that Informant E was able to adapt his behaviours in accordance with the behavioural norms of the host culture it seems obvious that he was able to act mindfully. This, no doubt, was one of the main contributing factors to his success in communication with his colleagues, which can be seen below. The above discussion provides some evidence that he was aware of the complexity of intercultural communication and the root cause of many difficulties associated with intercultural communication. We have also seen that he had some clear ideas of how to prevent falling into the pitfalls of ethnocentrism. Appling the criteria of ICC competence to these, we can find in terms of *savoir être* an interest in engaging with otherness and a willingness to be tolerant of difference and ambiguity. There is clear evidence of being willing to be flexible and willingness to decentre, and an indication of willingness to take adaptive measures. In terms of *savoirs* there is evidence of an awareness of the complexity of intercultural communication. It is also clear that he was able to identify ethnocentric views to be the major cause of communication breakdowns, and therefore thought it necessary to be mindful and

patient in socialising with culturally different others. In *savoir comprendre,* it appears that he was able to hold judgements and be flexible in handling unfamiliar situations. In terms of intercultural sensitivity development, all these are clear indications that the informant has developed a perspective that enabled him to accept and respect different ways of thinking and behaving, which shows that he clearly moved into the stage of ethnorelative *acceptance*.

Now let's look at some examples he gave about his experience of the host culture. The data shows that through observation and communication with the people he worked with he was able to learn first hand some significant differences between his home culture and the host culture in regard to communication style and other social behaviours. For instance, he was able to identify some characteristics of the culture in terms of behavioural norms as well as their underlying values and beliefs, such as the operation of *guanxi*, indirectness in communication, concern for *face*, respect for power, etc. In order to present his views and perceptions more clearly, in the following I will show what he said in the interview in detail.

One of the prominent behavioural features that he recognised of the way that Chinese people socialise is being less direct in sending negative messages. Earlier in the questionnaire he acknowledged he had encountered problems sometimes in knowing the real intentions of some Chinese speakers, because "sometimes people have not fulfilled their explicit promises" (QII-No.1). This point was elaborated through examples in the interview. One of them shows a problem that he had with a professor in English, one who was partly in charge of the production of the video programme which I mentioned earlier. Briefly, the problem was that when it happened that some part of the programme had to be filmed again, the students involved in it asked for extra pay for the work, and being the organiser and the representative of the student group, Informant E put forth the students' request to the certain professor. He promised that it would be resolved and persuaded the students to continue participation. But his promise failed to materialise. The following excerpt will show how the informant perceived the issue both from the perspectives of personal traits and cultural difference:

> … Because he didn't actually control things like money, he could only try his best, basically. And this is where the problems came about, it is perhaps because we all put too much faith in him… as being … So, for instance, he would make promises that more money would be made available or … you know this would be done, that would be done. And obviously … that was just … to cover himself … Unfortunately, when the money did not become available, that's when we got annoyed. So I think, but again… I think that was … just because of the complex

situation and … perhaps … I could be wrong… but perhaps he didn't want to be more … perhaps he wasn't very open, perhaps… I don't know. *Perhaps as a Westerner, I would say: Oh, I am really sorry, but this is my situation. You need to be very honesty about it.* And perhaps he wasn't very honesty about it. But I could understand it because he was an English professor and he didn't want to be seen … to not to be able to do the job, especially to someone who are just students. So I think, perhaps it was … again, I'm not sure whether this is culture thing or just because … of his relative high position compared to us. It might have more to do with the fact he is Chinese and not. And we were in different culture. But … *just instances like that made me realise that they do … the way … the Chinese person might look at the situation is different. Um… there was … also, I saw that it was very hard to say 'no' to someone.* (InterviewNote-4:3)

This might or might not be simply a case of miscommunication, but no doubt, difference in communication style is a contributing factor to the problem. Although Informant E was very sympathetic about the difficult situation that the professor was in, from the perspective of his own culture he thought it was necessary for the professor to be open and clear about the situation. That professor might have tried hard to solve the problem, but clearly the other side felt misled by him. Here the informant also suggested another factor, the relative higher position of the professor in comparison with the students, might have affected the situation. It is possible that as a professor who was in charge of the coordination of the programme production, one who was in a relatively more authoritative position, a concern of losing *face*, i.e., showing either that he was not able to negotiate for the students on the one side and that he was not able to persuade the students on the other side, had prevented him from being very frank about his situation. But the point is, despite all the factors such as whether that professor was purposefully misleading or not, it became clear to the informant that due to cultural imprint saying 'no' directly to others is very hard for a Chinese person.

To make this point clearer, he gave another example, also from his experiences with that professor. An American girl came to audition for a narrator's role, but she did not get the film director's approval. Instead of passing the message directly to her, this professor said something very different, as he stated:

> And the director said, 'No, she is not right, she is …' But she said this to … this person, and this person had to tell the American girl that she was not right for the role, 'we are very sorry, but …' And he couldn't do it. And he was saying 'Oh, yes, I'll give you a call,' you know, 'we'll keep in touch' and added: 'it was looking good.' And then, that was … when he was face to face with her. And as soon as she had left the room, he turned around and said to me: 'The director said that she was no good, but I could not tell her.' And that was very obvious that … it just pointed out so obviously to me that he could not say 'no'. … And that's really an obvious example. And I think, …obviously, *Western people can also feel very bashful as well. But I think, perhaps he found it especially difficult, because of the cultural background as well.* But that was a striking example to me how he

> couldn't… he couldn't … deal with… Westerners in that way, I think. *And also she had no idea… she couldn't pick this up from what he was trying to say.* Not that I blame her because she was not experienced in deal… dealing with this kind of things either. (InterviewNote-4:3)

From this account, it was clear that he could see how misunderstandings happen due to the cultural difference. He could see the contrast between Chinese culture and Western culture in communicating negative messages. He suggested that this professor acted in the way that could be normal in his cultural environment, expecting the listener to pick up the 'no' message from his vague remarks, but as he rightly pointed out, it was difficult for people like the American girl who had little experience of the indirect way of communication to pick the message up.

Another prominent social behavioural feature that he identified was the practice of *guanxi*. His experience enabled him to see how it operated in Chinese society and what its social implications were for foreign business or to people who had different cultural backgrounds. First, he recognised that *guanxi* plays a very important role in Chinese society, but also pointed out that this is not a social phenomenon that is unique to Chinese culture. In his view the concept of *guanxi* by nature is quite similar to what is known as *network* in the West, in his words: "[P]eople like to think it is an Asian thing or Chinese thing, and call it *guanxi*, but in truth, it is the same over the world. It is that we just don't have a word for it." (InterviewNote-4:1) An obvious difference, according to him, was that in China, "it's…perhaps…more explicit" and people "are more open about it" (InterviewNote-4:1).

Yet despite the commonality, he could see some differences in terms of underlying implications. To begin with, he was able to point out the long-term commitment it requires of people:

> … The things implied by the network, *guanxi*, as to leave the responsibility to you to keep the *guanxi*, … And you need to understand that… if you don't maintain the relationship or if you do something to damage the relationship it is very hard to get it back. In that respect, it is different to the West, … um… I… I would say if you are going to go and work in China you have to understand it. (InterviewNote-4:1-2)

From this account it can be seen that he had clear insight into the concept of *guanxi*. To him, the unspoken rule that *guanxi* had to be maintained and taken care of was an unfamiliar concept to a Westerner, and therefore had to be understood if one would work in China. Then, he was also able to describe how *guanxi* works as well as some of the cultural assumptions associated with it, and to compare two concepts in the west and in China – a good example of *savoir comprendre*. As I will show, he attributed

the problems in the following incident partly to the lack of understanding of the implications of *guanxi*.

To illustrate how indirect approach was used to handle less positive situations, he gave a good example of how *guanxi* affected the way the message was delivered. After her graduation, one of our graduates contacted the EAG office in Beijing, where she worked for experience during her one year study abroad, asking them to help in getting her a job in Beijing. They managed to find her a job through their *guanxi*, network. But a problem occurred when her employer was not very happy with her performance. What had happened was that "the boss did not tell the girl directly. It had to be done through John (substitute for the real name). It goes…goes round…so indirectly." (InterviewNote-4:4) The girl was given the job because of *guanxi*, thus instead of making complaints directly, the employer contacted those who recommended her. The trouble was that she had not been in touch with them and they did not know how to contact her. This was quite annoying to those who had helped her, as Informant E described:

> … as in this case, going… going back to the original contact, who recommended her. *And obviously you got the issue of face there as well. And I think that meant (John) lost face.* And… and I think, you know by…it was by his words that she got the job. *And then… they were not happy with her, which reflected badly on him in the business. I think it's perhaps an issue of guanxi and also a bit of issue of face as well.* Um… and again… this girl (Jane) (substitute for the real name) was not good… wasn't very good keeping in touch, and, and this really annoyed them. Cos also, you know, you should leave your contact details, you make efforts keeping in touch, because they obviously had been very nice in finding the job. And… he was saying that he had to go, he had to find her to tell her that her boss was not happy about her. But he didn't know how to do that, he didn't have any details. …. Perhaps you know, a little while later she could phone up them again, just let know how things were going and that sort of thing. *So perhaps that's her lack of understanding of it. She should keep the relationship… better.* And… so, that… that annoyed them all…. (InterviewNote-4:5)

This account shows that he could see how the concepts of *face* and *guanxi* related to the behavioural characteristics like indirectness, as he said: "*I think it's perhaps an issue of guanxi and also a bit of issue of face as well.*" Looking at the situation from the perspective of a Chinese, it appears that to give face to John, that employer did not criticise the girl directly, but left the issue for him to sort out. On the other hand, because the job was offered on the basis of John's recommendation, a favour to him, perhaps, it could be interpreted that the girl let him down, causing him to lose face. So, in pointing out the connections between these different aspects, Informant E demonstrated that he was able to go beyond his own cultural framework to interpret the situation, showing an understanding of the social behavioural norms of the host culture

and their underlying values. Just as he said, the practice of so called *guanxi* itself is not a phenomenon unique to Chinese culture, yet in different cultures the concept of social network has some different social implications. It looks likely that the girl Jane failed to understand this and thus did some damage to the relationship she had with her colleagues in the EAG office in Beijing.

It was mentioned at the beginning that Informant E was able to communicate well with his Chinese colleagues. I have already shown some evidence above, i.e., being able to conduct dialogues with host members and to learn from them their perspectives. The following example will provide further evidence of his communication with his Chinese colleagues, the extent of which indicates that he was able to communicate rather effectively, that there was a good level of trust and willingness to share thoughts and feelings between him and his Chinese colleagues.

To demonstrate his point that lack of cultural understanding could cause problems in the workplace, he described an event where his Chinese boss felt apprehensive about a task that she had been asked to do by the senior management of the EAG Bank. The cause of the uneasiness was that the CEO of the bank had the intention to visit China and to meet the Chinese premier, and asked the head of the Beijing branch, Informant E's boss, to arrange the meeting. From her perspective this was incredibly difficult. Apart from other difficulties, for the head of a foreign bank to ask for a meeting with the top man of a country, there was first of all a difference in position. But she was told that she must do it. She thus felt a lot of pressure and was not very pleased about it, as the informant described it:

> … And she was saying… it's… it just… it shows the arrogance of Westerners. And they think they can come here for any sort of meeting. You know, and she was…she was saying: Well, if the president of Bank of China wanted to go to London and meet Tony Blair it wouldn't happen…. (InterviewNote-4:6)

Taken the perspective of his Chinese boss, he could see the cultural differences between her and the senior management in perceiving the situation and found it quite interesting:

> …. The CEO of (EAG) said he wanted to meet Zhu Rongji, because when he worked at a different bank, he was the CEO of a Canadian bank a few years ago, he came to China, and met Zhu Rongji. But this was when he was a vice-premier, not the premier, and… and he was…he was the CEO of a bank. 'Oh, I met him a few years ago, we were good friends' that sort of thing. And my boss just said to him, to this western CEO, just meet him once obviously wasn't mean good friend. But to Zhu Rongji he won't…he won't think that way at all. He won't even know who he is. So I, I thought, I noticed that it's quite interesting perhaps because this

> Western CEO thought he'd met someone once the connection could still be there. Perhaps it's *guanxi* again… that…she was implying that to Zhu Rongji that would mean nothing. And so…you know…the Westerner boss says we are friends, but Zhu Rongji doesn't remember him. (InterviewNote-4:7)

From his account, there can be seen some differences between his Chinese boss and her Western boss in perceiving the business relationship, and that was the main cause of the problem. In his description he mentioned things like change of position from vice premier to premier, connections or *guanxi*, and these indicate that he was able to see some of the differences between the two sides in viewing the situation. That is, there was a lack of shared views in regard to how the business issues could be affected by different concepts of power and different concepts of relationships. His account of the event implies that in comparison more attention might be paid to power distance in Chinese culture and business relationships there might be affected more by how well the two sides know each other.

Perhaps, partly due to a belief that the Western senior management did not consider or did not want to consider these cultural factors, his boss felt frustrated and thought it was arrogant of them to ignore cultural differences. Being able to stand at a distance from his own culture, the informant could see how the way that the issue was handled by the management was perceived from another cultural perspective, i.e., from the perspective of his Chinese boss, and he summarised it as: "Obviously, because we are… from Western country we think we are much more important, we think we have the right to do this. It is… it is the point that she was trying to say." (InterviewNote-4:7) This example illustrates his point clearly: lack of cultural understanding could result in problems like disharmony and conflict in cross-cultural business operations.

Returning to his ability to communicate with his Chinese colleagues, the level at which he was able to communicate with them is clear evidence that he was able to manage it effectively. As the data show, he was not excluded from the conversation/s when complains were made about the Western senior managers' attitudes, including, probably, the use of the indiscriminate word 'arrogant Westerners'. Of course, his Chinese colleagues would not have let him know their views and aired their frustration to him if they had not trusted him or felt that being a Westerner he would be offended. The fact that they were willing to share their views, thoughts, and even frustrations with him, as his boss did, is a proof that he was able to win their trust, to be able to engage in conversations with them, and to be able to interact in a manner that is appropriate and effective. Also, as demonstrated, what he learnt from his cross-cultural experience is

beyond superficial understanding of the host culture. This from another aspect proved his effectiveness in communication.

Moreover, although he did not think that his work experience in China helped much in enriching his understanding of his own culture, yet the insights he gained into the different perspectives enabled him to look at some aspects of his own culture from a different angle, as it is demonstrated in the following remark:

> … again, I think there is sort of…there is arrogance…the Western arrogance. And that…obviously comes through very easily. When I'm sitting there, surrounded by Chinese people in Beijing, it is so easy to see that. But obviously someone sitting in London doesn't see it the same… quite the same way. They might have a different view. (InterviewNote-4:7-8)

It is evident that being exposed to different views and different social realities enabled him to broaden his worldviews, to see things differently, and he was thus able to reflect on his own culture and interpret things from a new perspective. As he stated in the questionnaire, this experience not only to a considerable extent enriched his understanding of Chinese culture, but also changed considerably his perceptions of cross-cultural communication (QII-No.1).

Apart from being able to identify conceptual and behavioural differences and the impact of them on cross-cultural communication and business activities, he was also able to see how life and business could be affected by other sociocultural factors, such as institutional differences, level of development, etc. In discussing in what way a foreign businessman should prepare himself when going to do business in China, he suggested that one has to realise that it took longer to get things done there due to various reasons, such as less developed infrastructure, bureaucracy at various levels, a need to develop *guanxi*, etc. For example, he said: "….Things might be quicker in the West. And that might… as I am saying that might not be cultural reasons. …just be physical actuality of doing things. It is hard because of the bureaucracy thing…. I suppose, you need the *guanxi* to make things work. And you can't expect instant results, or things happen straight away. Things are often very slow." (InterviewNote-4:8)

Overall, it seems clear that Informant E was actively involved in socialisation with host members. He appeared to be able to build up good relationships with his Chinese colleagues and to learn from them their ways of thinking and behaving. In coping with unfamiliar and difficult situations, he tended to take a flexible approach. Also, he appeared to be able to reflect on his own culture vis-à-vis the host culture. Although there is no obvious example of how he actually did in interactions with host

members, there is convincing evidence that he could communicate effectively and was willing to make adaptive changes. As shown earlier he valued the work experience that he had in China, and more generally, he appreciated that the sojourn experience presents a wider world to him, and broadened his horizon, as he said in the interview: "…. coming back, everything seems a bit boring, and a bit less interesting. Obviously, because…this is because I've seen new things…" (InterviewNote-4:11)

In terms of ICC competence, apart from the development that has been identified in *savoir être*, *savoirs*, there is further evidence of his development in *savoir comprendre*, *savoir apprendre/faire*, as well as *savoir être*, *savoirs*. To be more specific, in *savoir être*, there is clear evidence that he was interested in discovering different ways of living and thinking, and was willing to take up different perspectives to interpret both familiar and unfamiliar social realities. The evidence that he was able to understand his Chinese interlocutors' perspectives and that he was willing to shift perspectives to interpret behaviours and presuppositions of his own culture shows clearly that he was able to decentre in his contact with otherness. In terms of *savoirs*, the discussion shows that he had gained clear insights into some of the social behavioural norms which are significant to the host culture, such as communication styles, and was able to see the impact of the differences between the cultures on cross-cultural interaction in general, and on business in particular. In *savoir comprendre*, there is strong evidence that he was able to understand some different social practices in relation to their social contexts and to relate them to similar ones in his own culture, e.g. the different values and beliefs system under which they are operated, and was therefore able to see how to avoid or minimise dysfunctions. In terms of *savoir apprendre/faire*, again, there is some convincing evidence that he was able to find out from his Chinese interlocutors as well as others different ways of behaving and different ways of perceiving world realities. Although there is no obvious evidence of how he behaved in his interactions with his Chinese interlocutors, it is clear that he was able to establish good relationships with host members. Finally, in terms of *savoir s'engager*, it seems that he was trying to draw a line between cultural practice of indirect communication and being dishonest by applying both the perspective of his own culture and the host culture, although this comparison is made on the basis of an individual case rather than a common phenomenon, it is nevertheless an indication of being able to make critical judgement on a clear value basis. Overall, there is a good development of all five aspects of ICC competence.

How to understand these in terms of intercultural sensitivity development? In the earlier part I made the point that the willingness and the competence that he had to respect and to engage with otherness is a clear evidence of getting into the stage of *acceptance*. In accordance with Bennett's theory (1993), the move from *acceptance* into *adaptation* requires the abilities to put into practice one's intention or willingness to accept differences or otherness. Through the discussion it becomes evident that the informant obtained both the attitudes and some necessary knowledge and skills to manage this. With regard to attitudes, apart from what has been shown earlier, there shows a readiness in engaging with otherness and a readiness to learn different perspectives, which are associated only with the stage of *adaptation*. As for knowledge, he demonstrated obtaining the knowledge that is necessary for *adaptation*. On the one hand he showed an awareness of such issues like relationship between value system and behaviours, impact of identities on relationships and interactions, etc. which are an essential part of the competence to avoid or minimise dysfunctions in intercultural communication. On the other hand, he gained some important insights into the host culture which enabled him to be more effective in communication with host members, such as communication styles, some significant values and beliefs, etc., especially in relation with work-related behaviours. In terms of skills, apart from being patient, tolerant of ambiguity, etc., as the previous paragraph shows, he developed various skills that are absent in the stage of *acceptance*, such as managing relationships, eliciting meanings from others, and mediating between different interpretations of meanings, etc. Based on all this evidence, it seems safe to say that Informant E was in the stage of *adaptation*.

Finally, this case analysis highlights the following issues:

- The success of the informant in communication with host members is mainly due to the competences that he had in managing various aspects of intercultural communication. But it also shows that a favourable environment is very important.
- Work experience proved to be valuable in gaining understanding of how business or work in general across cultures would be affected by various cultural and sociocultural factors.
- It is very important to understand some fundamental values and behaviours traits in regard to communication styles.

- Given that people do not have same expectations of outsiders as they do of insiders, what should an outsider learn to maximise communication?

In this chapter, I presented the five individual cases in detail, and in the next chapter I will be able to make some cross-board comparisons together with more information from those who only took part in either the first or the second questionnaire survey, and then make general analysis. But several points can be drawn from this analysis. First of all, the assessment has shown the possibility of assessing intercultural competence, and this is one of the purposes of this research work. Secondly, it has revealed variation in students' needs after the year abroad which is ostensibly the same experience for all – and that this implies that a follow-up course would need to cater for differing needs in some way (perhaps by individualised autonomous learning. Finally, the use and combination of the two models has been productive, revealing the gaps in each and showing how the gaps can be filled:

- The two models are mutually supportive, and can be mutually supplementary and explanatory.
- ICC model does not explicitly include some essential skills for intercultural communication, especially for early stage of ethnorelative development, such as patience, tolerance, flexibility, courtesy, and listening skills. Neither does DMIS treat these fully.
- The broadness of the DMIS means it is difficult to operate sometimes, as it is not able to pinpoint the cause/s of occasional regresses.

Chapter Seven

Data Analysis – An Overall Analysis of the Data

The five individual profiles in the last chapter enable us to have some good ideas of how the informants interacted with host members and perceived the host culture vis-à-vis that of their own. By means of the ICC model and the DMIS model I have analysed in evaluative terms the competences they acquired in dealing with their intercultural experiences. In this chapter, I will bring together different aspects of the data and analysis and try to understand the development beyond the individual basis. This process contains basically two aspects. First, to better appreciate the relationship between individuals' development and social context, more information will be extracted from the two questionnaires to add to our understanding of the sojourn context. Second, an effort will be made to identify the significant similarities of and differences between the cases and to examine them against some of the theoretical concepts applied in this study. These, I hope, will enable us to see better not only the level of IC competence development, but also what facilitated the development and prevented further development.

7.1. General Features – Good Level of Involvement, and Satisfaction

In regard to the first aspect, in general the five individual cases represent the whole group of the students. That is, they are not atypical in terms of development in attitudes, in perceptions of intercultural communication and the host culture, as well as in involvement in socialisation with host members. First of all, it can be found in the five profiles very positive attitudes towards both the sojourn experience in general and the work experience in particular, except one person in regard to the latter. This positive attitude, as the following evidence will show, is common to all the students. In the first questionnaire 10 out of the 11 respondents described their experience in Beijing to be exciting: 8 used the term 'exciting but also stressful sometimes', 2 used 'exciting and happy', and only one described it as 'not much different from experiences had elsewhere'. Again, in terms of expectation, 4 out of 11 thought that what they experienced was better than what they had expected, including the one who perceived the experience as not much different from his previous ones, 3 thought it to be 'not different', and 2 thought it completely different, but did not choose the option 'worse than expected'. The remaining two added their own comments, one describing it to be "different, sometimes better sometimes worse than expected" (QI-No.4), and the other

one stating that: "I came with no expectations and I just take each day as it comes and deal with problems as they arise." (QI-No.7) These demonstrate that the overall emotional responses are positive, although stress and anxiety is evident. This is in line with the five individual cases analysed earlier. In terms of work experience, six out of the seven respondents who took part in the second questionnaire rated it to be either as 'very valuable' (3/7) or as 'quite valuable' (3/7), and again the same number of people described the experience to be 'very happy' or 'quite happy' respectively, with only one exception, which was discussed in the individual profiles. The reasons for being happy with the work experience vary, but they can be grouped basically into two categories, i.e., appreciation for the opportunity to explore their future career development or for general development, and appreciation of the chance to learn the host language and culture. For instance, one commented that "… it has enabled me to make further decisions about my direction for work in the future." (QII-No.5) While other statements include: "…it has introduced me to work in this field and the unique problems that the company faces in China" (QII-No.2) and "[I]t has improved my language skills and helped me understand Chinese culture and society better." (QII-No.7)

As well as reflecting positive emotions, the surveys also displayed the respondents' positive attitude towards interactions with host members and the culture. Here again, it shows that the five individual cases represent well the whole group of students in terms of willingness to socialise with host members and to learn their culture. The earlier cases analysis identified a strong interest in interacting and establishing friendships with host members, and this, as can be seen below, is clearly a feature shared by all the participants of the survey investigations. In the first questionnaire, out of the nine factors listed, skills to communicate with host members are what most respondents (8 out of 9 who answered the question) regarded as the most importance factor in making their sojourn successful. Other factors that were rated as in the top three include being open to different views and concepts (4 out of 9), good relationships with both fellow students and host members (4 out of 9), and good learning environment (4 out of 9). Living conditions (2/9), safety (1/9), and food (1/9), are also listed among top important factors, but they appeared not to be common concerns. As most of the people, 9 out of 11, responded to the question, and the two who did not answer this question also appeared quite content with their experience in Beijing, for whatever reason/s, and used the term 'better than expected' to describe it, it is obvious that the positive attitudes towards and high level of interest in exploring the new

experience shown in the five cases are shared by all those being investigated. Also, the responses shown above are a clear indication that the willingness to socialise with host members and to engage with otherness identified in all the five cases is typical of this group of students.

In terms of involvement in socialisations, once again, one can find the individual cases to be a close reflection of the group. That is to say, there is clear presence of effort in socialising and establishing friendships with host members. For instance, in responding to the question of how they felt they were treated by their Chinese friends, only one respondent expressed explicitly that he had no Chinese friends but those who went to pubs together. But this is obviously an evidence of his socialising with Chinese people, even if no close relationships were cultivated. The rest of the group appear to have gone further in managing social interactions and relationships, as most of them were able to report good relationships or comment on what facilitates or prevents interactions with host members. For example, one stated that: "I think my Chinese friends treat me the same as they include me in their conversations, activities and we always have good time." (QI-No.7) The satisfaction displayed shows the effective of communication at least in terms of establishing rapport. Significantly, this positive feeling can be felt in many of the comments about the hospitality that they experienced. However, as pointed out in the previous chapter, while they felt that the hosts' friendliness and open attitude made communication possible and enjoyable, they also encountered problems in seeking friendship, which include lack of easy access to host communities, different motivations for interactions, linguistic competence, cultural differences, etc., which I will address later.

On the other hand, there appears an awareness of some issues concerning intercultural communication, such as managing relationships and communication strategies, etc. Several people mentioned that the level of expectations that their Chinese friends had of them was different in comparison with that of their co-national friends. For example, one of them said: "As far as I can tell we're treated roughly the same, but they obviously don't expect the same level of empathy/behaviour since conversation is still fairly basic…" (QI-No.4) Another one suggested that the large difference in lifestyle between him and his Chinese friends meant that they had some difficulties to understand him, thus they had different expectations of him. Further evidence on this can be seen from a comment that touched the issue of different perceptions of and relationships between cultures, indicating that they enjoyed a sort of 'cultural privilege',

as some Chinese, especially those out of cities, "… are still slightly in 'awe' of us…" (QI-No.5) Of course, this would affect the way people interact, and I will come back to this point later. These comments, from different angles, reveal their awareness of the impact of various sociocultural issues on cross-cultural interactions. But the point here is that these are clear indications of involvement of all the respondents in cross-cultural socialisations, although at different levels.

That the five cases were not exceptional, but representative of the group can be further seen from their understanding of the coping strategies, although the information available here is limited to the early stages of the sojourn. Briefly, there is a clear awareness among the respondents (8/11) that effective communication entails, apart from linguistic competence, the attitudes of being open and willing to experience new things, an understanding of the host culture, and the skills such as exercising patience, showing respect, and being flexible. For instance, one respondent said that it is necessary to "understand their culture and ways of doing things and adapt accordingly. Otherwise nothing will be achieved." (QI-No.7) Another one accentuated mindful behaviour, pointing out the need for "[R]espect of their idea; respect of culture." (QI-No.11) Personal, interpersonal and other factors were also mentioned, such as confidence, being naturally sociable, hand gestures, etc. The predominant view, however, is that it is necessary to understand the host culture, as shown explicitly by a comment: "An understanding of their culture and way of thinking, philosophy, etc… and also their politics and important people in history." (QI-No.9) These show clear evidence that the five cases are not exceptional cases.

Thus from different aspects, I have shown that the five individual cases can be regarded as fair reflections of the whole group of the students, and therefore it is reasonable to assume that some of the issues discussed in the profiles, to a large extent, are applicable to the group as a whole. On this basis, I will try to identify some prominent features or patterns of their development, and also hope to understand them in relation to the various contributing factors within the given context. I hope such a discussion will bring us to some more general issues of cultural learning and intercultural adjustment, etc., and thus make a meaningful contribution to the general understanding of intercultural competence development through experiential learning or sojourner's adjustment. Although this group was selected as the basis originally for further curriculum development, and it is not possible to be definitive on 'transferability' of the findings (Guba and Lincoln, 1989), it is possible to speculate that

students in other universities on similar work-placements would be represented by the findings here too. Now I will come to the next part of this discussion: the issues that are significant to our understandings of the cases both in terms of how the competence development is facilitated or impeded and in terms of further direction for development.

7.2. Identifying Similarities and Differences

Our preceding discussion has established the point that the cognitive responses of the students to cultural differences typically include the strategies of being open, patient, flexible, and cultural learning, and great emphasis was given to the strategy of showing politeness and respect in handling intercultural relationships. I have pointed out that these are indications of not only their awareness of intra- and inter- cultural communication differences but also their willingness to engage with otherness and to make intercultural adaptive changes. In the sense that they represent the perceptual understanding of, and hence provide guidance to their management of relations and interactions, they can be regarded as the students' 'models' of intercultural competence. What is emphasised in their 'models', as earlier analysis shows, are some qualities essential for effective intercultural communication, and the skills involved are those important for effective interpersonal interactions and cognitive understanding. It can be seen from the five cases that overall the intention of engaging with otherness and making adaptive changes were successfully turned into actions and subsequently resulted in effective communication and satisfactory sojourn. However, there are differences between the individual cases both in terms of how interactions are managed and the outcomes. A cross-board comparison of the similarities and differences will enable a deeper understanding of IC competence development.

Returning to the earlier analysis, there were examples that Informants A and C encountered some difficulties in handling indirect ways of communication, especially in regard to dealing with potential conflicts or different views. They took different approaches in resolving their problems, but ended up with the same result: not being able to elicit the other's views or to obtain expected cooperation. Informant A felt frustrated sometimes because despite all his effort, some of his Chinese colleagues failed to take his points and to respond to his invitations for direct discussions of their differences. What he emphasised in his approach, according to the data, were patience, showing respect, careful listening and explicitness in expressing himself, etc., and what seems to be missing, as I pointed out, were the competence to negotiate the differences

with his Chinese interlocutors and to discover their perspectives. Informant C, as the earlier analysis suggests, also lacks these skills. But, different from Informant A, his general strategy towards differences was avoidance for fear of causing offence unintentionally, and in dealing with indirect ways of communication he chose to wait for clues for understanding his interlocutors instead of active mediation and discovery. It is thus reasonable to say that his difficulties in meaning attribution and interactions are not unrelated to lack of the skills.

A comparison of all the profiles will provide support for the claim that a lack of the skills of mediation and discovery is a major cause of the difficulties that the two informants had in handling potential conflicts in particular, and different ways of communication in general. Like the others the two informants were able to identify some behavioural characteristics of indirect communication and its social implications and showed a willingness to be accommodating. For example, there was an example earlier to show that Informant C was able to identify the links between indirect behaviours and concepts regarding social relationships, i.e., *face*, harmony, etc., and Informant A gave examples of some behavioural traits of the way that some of his Chinese colleagues handled conflicts, such as being vague in language, giggling, or 'saying one thing really mean another' (QII-No.4). That is to say, it is not the case that they had less knowledge than the others about the indirect communication, nor did it seem to be that they were less willing to be accommodating. Some clues leading to an answer can be found from how Informants D and E handled and perceived different views. Profile D shows that the informant and her Chinese interlocutors were able to negotiate their meanings over some difficult issues, which, for many Chinese, concern the very issue of their cultural identities, but they managed to discuss it at a non-personal level and accepted the differences as general cultural based biases. It might be that the expectations of differences from each other enabled them to be more open and flexible, and therefore willing to negotiate their differences, a signal of cultural awareness. But the point here is that given that all five paid attention to learning the cultural differences and all had the desire to engage with otherness, it looks likely that one crucial difference here is the presence or absence of the skills for mediation and discovery in handling intercultural differences, especially potential difficulties.

A support for the argument can be found from the experience of Informant E from a slightly different perspective. As demonstrated earlier, his good relationships and interactions with his Chinese colleagues enabled him to gain good insights into their

perspectives, and he was therefore able to see why in their eyes the senior Western bank managers were arrogant and their demand on the local manager showed an ethnocentric perspective. He admitted that being with Chinese colleagues enabled him to see things from a wider angle. What is essential is that his being able to shift perspectives in viewing the situations was the result of understanding his colleagues' views and that wouldn't be possible if he had not developed the skills to elicit meanings from them and of being able to empathise. The fact that his Chinese colleagues were willing to share their views and emotions with him, as I said already, showed mutual trust and respect, and that suggests that managing relationships is an important part of the skills for eliciting meanings.

To formulate this from a different angle, the two examples above highlight the importance of empathy in handling differences in intercultural communication.

Having made the point that the presence or absence of the skills of mediation and discovery is a key factor that resulted in the disparity in managing cultural differences and potential difficulties, it has to be added that social interactions have to be understood in their social contexts, and without taking into account contextual differences it is not possible to have full understanding of why a person does what he does. Case C illustrates that encountering otherness could be a daunting experience and that an unwelcoming or indifferent social context discourages interactions and therefore causes anxiety. This draws attention to two issues. One is that we need to bear in mind when assessing competence that the relationship between the factors of cognition and behaviour and the factor of context is interactive, so conclusions should not be drawn out of context. Another concerns the importance of developing awareness and the skills to manage anxiety. Informant C said that when he realised that he could not wait for friendships to happen he took initiatives to socialise with host members and subsequently reduced his anxiety. His taking active action to deal with the anxiety shows a development in awareness of, for instance, the anxiety-inducing nature of intercultural communication, which obviously prompted him to develop the skills needed to cope with his situations. I will return to these issues later.

In general, there can be seen ample evidence of development of cultural awareness in various aspects, and consequently the strategies the informants took to manage their actions or interactions in dealing with cultural differences, such as showing respects, being patient, careful listening, etc. As I demonstrated above, most of

the students who participated in the surveys showed awareness of the potential difficulties of intercultural communication, and believed it important to be open and flexible towards differences as well as learn and adapt to the different ways of thinking and behaving. The five profiles showed in more detail the development of the informants in cultural awareness and how it affected their behavioural response to differences. For instance, there were examples showing care being exercised so as not hurt others' self-perceptions, and examples of their making adaptive changes in order to 'fit in'. Despite a lot of similarities, it is possible to identify some differences that could distinguish higher level of readiness for adaptation from comparatively less degree of readiness.

7.3. Levels of Cultural Awareness and Skills in Managing Communication

One such difference is reflected in the degree of cultural self-awareness, awareness of self as a cultural being (Gudykunst and Hammer, 1983). That is to say, although all of the informants were aware that due to cultural differences people think and behave differently and that that affects interactions across cultures, it is not always the case that everyone was conscious of how their own cultural make-ups affected their perceptions of and reactions to cultural differences. For instance, a contrast can be found in the ways that communication dysfunctions were handled by Informant A and Informant B. When he discovered that his sense of humour was not understood by his Chinese interlocutors, Informant B realised the culturally-based assumptions in his own perceptions and behaviours, saying: "when it came to humour, it was a different concept altogether really", and thus made conscious effort to avoid communication dysfunctions by making adaptive changes, in his words: "from that moment on, I... I never try to be funny". Whether this strategy would lead to his long term satisfaction is not within the topic of this discussion, but what one can see is that he enjoyed good relationships with host members during his sojourn and appeared to be effective in his communication with host members. The data show that it is the awareness of the influence of his culture on his own cognition and behaviours that enabled him to empathise with different perspectives and to adapt to the differences.

While the way Informant A dealt with different communication styles seems to show less clearly self reflections and adaptations, on the one hand, he was seen to be aware of the differences between him and his Chinese colleagues in terms of the ways communication was conducted and was able to identify some characteristics of the

indirect communication. On the other hand, he seemed to have the expectation that making his point clearly and directly to his Chinese colleagues he would be able to persuade them to do the same. Despite the good relationships that he had with them in general, he felt frustrated not being able to gain their cooperation in this regard. It seems that a lack of sufficient cultural self-awareness prevented him from empathising with different ways of interpreting differences, and therefore he was not able to move out of his relatively fixed views. That is, he was not aware or fully aware of the fact that his Chinese colleagues relied not only on verbal but also on contextual means to send and receive messages, and consequently his strategy of clear message was not well responded to. It is not hard to see that a lack of clear awareness of his own cultural make-up is a contributing factor to the dysfunctions. As I pointed out, the lack of understanding of the other's perspectives resulted in dispositional attributions, and that is not unrelated to a lack of cultural self-awareness. A similar point can be made about the way Informant C perceived his Chinese interlocutors. One comment that he made shows a clear trait of stereotyping, where he said that "most people's general attitude is very defensive, um... so whatever kind of subject that were brought up, if they didn't quite agree with it, they'd um... back off and ... go on defensive about it... in the dialogue." The tendency of his dispositional attribution shows little self reflection, and consequently he appeared not only judgmental, but also had difficulties in mediation.

Related to cultural self-awareness, perhaps as a consequence of it, it can be found from the data another aspect of awareness development, whose presence or absence makes difference in managing relationships and communication, i.e., what to expect of culturally different others. Informant D's experience shows that it could be easier to adapt to cultural differences if people accept that difference is the norm of intercultural social interactions and then are prepared to be open and flexible. In her case, as differences were perceived to be interesting rather than threatening, there was less anxiety and more willingness to exchange views and to negotiate meanings. Informant A put a lot of emphasis on openness and flexibility, but it seems likely that he did not realise that his expectations of his Chinese colleagues sometimes were self-cultural oriented. No doubt, personality and situational disparity makes a lot of difference in terms of the way people behave and subsequently the outcomes of interactions, but clearly knowing that your behaviours will not be regarded as unacceptable and your interlocutors are just as normal as you are could encourage efforts in establishing common grounds.

Another important aspect of cultural awareness development, the absence of which hindered some informants in their interpretations and interactions with their host members, concerns an understanding of cultural identity related issues, i.e., cultural categorisation and meaning attribution. I pointed out earlier that due to a lack of awareness of one's own cultural perspective, sometimes informants interpreted behavioural differences as personality traits rather than situational-based actions. The difference between Informant B and Informant C in interpreting an identical behaviour can serve as an example. As was shown earlier, Informant C's comment on the film directors' behaviours focused more on personal traits: their language was direct and crude, but to Informant B there was also another aspect, that is, their behaviour was affected by their working conditions: time is money, and thus situation-attributed.

The above discussion demonstrates that self-cultural awareness is a key factor to intercultural adaptive changes, which sensitises one's awareness of others' needs and their perspectives. A clear link can be identified between the development of the informants in cultural awareness, especially self-awareness, and their development in cognition and behaviours, such as being prepared to interact and mediate with differences, interpreting others' meanings in contexts, etc. There appear clearly some disparities between the individuals, but as there is only limited information, that is, it is only possible to see what was presented to us by the informants, which could be selectively presented, so it is a bit risky to make comparisons between them beyond specific situations. But as a whole, it appears evident that some individuals adapted better to their new cultural environment and could handle better intercultural communication than others partly due to a clearer cultural awareness, and consequently had higher level of satisfaction. There is little doubt that other factors such as personality, interpersonal skills, as well asocial contexts also play key roles in interpersonal interactions and intercultural adaptation, as a comment shows in the first questionnaire: "Naturally being able to communicate and being a sociable person is a lot more important than linguistic ability (in all countries)" (QI-No.1). However, the evidence presented shows clearly that insufficient cultural awareness hindered the development of some informants in terms of intercultural competence or intercultural sensitivity.

7.4. Development in Knowledge of the Host Culture

The personal experiences of the students with the host culture enabled them to see, to hear, and to feel what is not always available from books or classroom learning, and that enabled them to obtain a good knowledge of the ways host members live, work as well as their perspectives. The analysis indicates that those who were better able to engage in mediation and discovery tended to gain more insiders' perspectives, such as how the senior bank managers' views were perceived by their Chinese staff; and the different perspectives Informant D's Chinese friends had about the issues of Taiwan and Tibet. More generally, their knowledge of the social, economic, and political situations also helps them to see how cross-cultural social interactions and work would be affected by, for example, indirect communication, the practice of *guanxi*, heavy bureaucracy, etc. This knowledge could also lead to more situational oriented explanation of differences. For example, having seen how life is like in China, Informant D attempted to associate a behavioural difference between the cultures, i.e., that privacy is less respected in Chinese culture, with crowded living conditions of many Chinese people, and therefore took the behavioural trait as an outcome of social reality. Although her explanation captures only part of the reality, and may not even be the major part, it is clear that her knowledge of the culture enabled her to put behaviours in the perspective of their contexts instead of stereotyping.

It can be seen from these examples that in general the specific knowledge that they acquired about the host culture enables them to have some realistic views of what it would be like to work and live in Chinese cultural environment, as well as to shift perspectives in interpretation and interaction. To apply the concept of intercultural sensitivity development, one can find from these examples the abilities to discriminate and adapt to different views and behaviours. The individual profiles presented earlier show some differences in level of adaptation, some more ready than others to shift perspectives and to make behavioural adjustments. But, as I said already, those who appeared less ready also showed clear willingness to adapt, and their problems seem to have more to do with insufficient cultural awareness and shortage of skills to manage different views and behaviours. Based on the limited information available, there does not seem to be a big difference between the more ready and the less ready in terms of the scope of knowledge about the host culture, although the more ready appeared to have clearer understanding of the other's perspectives. That is to say, although the less ready might be able to discriminate prominent cultural features just as well as the more

ready did, they would have more difficulties to shift perspectives. Despite the differences, it is clear that they did make good efforts to adapt to their new cultural environment, actively making friends and learning the host culture, so I would say that their development is beyond the stage of *acceptance* into *adaptation*, but with occasional regressions.

One of the difficulties that the informants had, as shown by the data, is to manage different communication styles, particularly in regard to different approaches to conflict. The above discussion suggests that with the skills of mediation and discovery, differences can be overcome by negotiating for common grounds and exercising tolerance. But as far as the causes of the difficulties are concerned, it seems that the problems are primarily due to not being aware of the context-dependent nature of the Chinese communication style and thus not being able to pick up the messages that were deeply embedded in the contexts. In Chapter 2, I discussed some research on comparative cultural studies like Hall's theory of high- and low- context communication (1977), universal value dimensions, along which all cultures are believed to be comparable (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede and Bond, 1988; Triandis, 1995), and Ting-Toomey's studies on cultural differences in communication styles and conflict management (Ting-Toomey, 1999; Trubisky, Ting-Toomey, and Lin, 1991; Ting-Toomey and Oetzel, 2002). Chinese culture is thought to be a high-context culture, of which indirect communication is thought to be a significant feature, and in comparison with Western cultures, which are believed to be on the other end of the spectrum, less information is actually transmitted through verbal means (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Thus, an indirect message would require more insiders' knowledge to uncover what is not voiced – tacit scripts shared by group members in regard to social roles, relationships, and expected behaviours of group members. I would assume that the informants did not yet have a complete command of the tacit knowledge shared by insiders, and consequently they would not be very sensitive to contextual clues despite the fact that they had obtained some pretty good ideas of the characteristics of the indirect mode of communication and some cultural assumptions of Chinese people.

Thus the data shows us that as well as being able to identify some more observable features of the indirect communication mode, the informants were also able to associate it tentatively with the concepts of *face*, social harmony, power distance. As I am going to show, this is a clear indication that they were becoming increasingly sensitive to other perspectives and their understanding of the culture is far beyond a

superficial level. However, it looks likely that a lack of understanding of how individuals in Chinese culture perceive their relations to others is a cause of some of their difficulties.

The contrast of direct and indirect communication styles, as is shown in Chapter Two, reflects some deeply seated value differences in regard to social relationships and behaviours, and therefore to be able to access the tacit knowledge shared by a high-context cultural community requires first of all some understanding of the fundamental values that underpin their cultural assumptions. The view has been made in the previous discussion that a clear link has been identified between indirect communication and some collectivistic values and beliefs, such as group harmony, face concerns, authority and social hierarchy, etc. (Ting-Toomey, 1999), and that interdependent construal, which features strongly in collectivistic cultures in regard to individuals' views of themselves in relation to others, predisposes individuals to concerns of their group/s (Hara and Kim, 2004). Studies show that there are some obvious differences between Chinese culture and what is known collectively as the Western culture in terms of value orientation; and Chinese culture is believed to have the features of collectivism, larger power distance, higher uncertainty avoidance, and long term orientation (e.g. Bond, 1991; Pan and Zhang, 2004; Selmer, 2002; Wright *et al.*, 2002). For instance, Pan and Zhang point out that "The Chinese depend more on groups or institutions to determine what they should do and emphasise loyalty to the group" and they are "more likely to cooperate with others to avoid risks and reduce responsibilities." (2004:85) On the other hand, Chinese collectivism, stated Selmer, shows the characteristics of "affiliation with smaller in-groups, anti-social attitudes, networking, face consciousness, indirect communication, etc." (2002:21) Also, it is believed that due to the deeply ingrained influence of Confucianism, Chinese culture has the characteristics of being authoritarian, hierarchical, and people pay much attention to status differences. (Selmer, 2002)

What the informants identified about the behavioural and conceptual differences, which were demonstrated in the analysis of the five cases, did pinpoint some of the core issues of the difficulties in cross-cultural communication and interaction between Chinese and non-Chinese. Indeed, issues that they pointed out like *face*, indirect communication, *guanxi*, bureaucracy and work efficiency, and hierarchic power relationship have been the topics of many discussions on cross-cultural interactions, especially cross-cultural business/management. For instance, the relationship between *guanxi* and work ethical issues has been looked into (Sergeant and Frenkel, 1998;

Wright *et al.* 2002); issues in regard to the impact of Chinese values on management and cross-cultural relationships between superior and subordinate have also been widely investigated (e.g. Chen *et al.* 2005; Selmer, 2002; Wong and Slater, 2002); there are also a lot of studies on how workplace relationships and behaviours, motivations, negotiation styles are affected by the value differences (e.g. Pan and Zhang, 2002; Taormina, 1983). The impact of these differences on teaching and learning has also been discussed (e.g. English-Lueck, 1994; Watkins and Biggs, 2001). As I said above, being able to see the link between the behavioural differences and their underlying values and beliefs shows a development in sensitivity to different cultural perspectives. However, due to different concepts of self and others and therefore different angles of interpretation of behaviours, there were still some difficulties for the informants to understand the attitudinal and emotional attachment of their Chinese interlocutors to the values and social norms of the cultural system.

Hara and Kim's research on the correlation of self-construals and conversational indirectness shows that people with highly developed interdependent self-construal incline to interpret and produce indirect messages, and that those who tend to produce indirect messages are also likely to interpret messages indirectly (2004). This is partly because, according to research, interdependent self-construal is associated with interpersonal sensitivity (Ibid.). The point is, how individuals identify themselves in relation to others in Chinese culture is different from that of the individualistic cultures (broadly known as Western culture), and therefore the differences in the way some of the informants interpreted their Chinese interlocutors' indirect behaviours reflect differences in self-construals or different cognition, affection, and behaviour. For instance, although face concern is a universal phenomenon, according to Ting-Toomey and others, people from collectivistic cultures tend to use other-oriented face-saving strategies and other-face approval-enhancement interactions in contrast to the tendency of self-oriented face-saving strategies and self-face approval-seeking interactions in individualistic cultures. (Gudykunst and Mody, 2002; Ting-Toomey, 1999) So, a higher level of intercultural sensitivity will require further development in understanding these cultural identity-related issues.

7.5. Development in Critical Cultural Awareness

Another aspect of the development is that of critical awareness. In this regard there is clear evidence of students' being able to identify some misfits in terms of

cultural perspective, such as different concepts of power, social relationships, and their social consequences. To a limited extent there is also some evidence of critical thinking in regard to the moral values of some social behaviour. For instance, Informant A pointed out that the practice of *guanxi* often means involving family members and friends in business, and this could cause problems from the Western perspective. Informant D also indicated that *guanxi* could lead to unfair distribution of resources and those who were in power would be able to benefit from it unfairly. I mentioned already that the relationship between *guanxi* and work-related ethics has been a topic of discussion for many involved in cross-cultural business interactions and work related issues. The traditional concept of distrust of out-groups has resulted in reliance on family and friends; and respect for power and authority coupled with the system means sometimes power is abused. The recognition of the problems shows students' awareness of the potential difficulties in regard to social justice and fairness. Also, it appears that the informants tried to draw a line between cultural difference and dishonest behaviour. Overall, all the informants gained a lot of insights into Chinese culture, and not only could they identify some institutional and social differences, but they could also understand or identify some cultural assumptions of Chinese people.

Overall, to repeat my conclusion, further development seems to require deeper understanding of cultural identity related issues in general, and for some there is still the need to develop skills to elicit from others different attitudes and assumptions, which involves being able to manage rapport and generate mutual trust.

7.6. Contact Environment, Language Competence Development, and Sojourn

In response to the question of whether good knowledge of Chinese language is essential for successfully carrying out the job they did, 4/7 of the respondents said yes, 2/7 said no, and one expressed an uncertainty, and added: "It certainly helps. But I have met many competent people here who can't speak the language." What is interesting is that not all of those who appeared effective in communicating with host members thought it essential to have good knowledge of Chinese language for carrying out their work. This suggests that in some circumstances competence in host language is essential for successful work, but in other circumstances it is rather a bonus. There are two issues that I want to bring to discussion in this section: the relationship between language competence and other aspects of intercultural competence; and the relationship between contact environment and language learning and sojourn experience in general. I

will first look at the different responses of the students, trying to get some insights into the cause/s of the differences, and after that, I will try to relate this case to some other research outcomes so that it can be understood from a wider perspective.

Earlier analysis shows that both Informant B and Informant E had good social relationships with their Chinese colleagues and were very effective in communicating with them. But in regard to how important the role was of host language competence to their job success their opinions were not all the same. The difference between them reflects a difference in their work environment, which had different demands on host language competence. That is to say, it reflects the fact that in international work and business English is often used as a lingua franca, and thus in many circumstances people can make do without much knowledge of other languages. So the difference in contact environment led to the difference both in attitude towards learning the host language and subsequently sensitivity to it.

For instance, Informant B thought that a good competence in host language was essential for successfully carrying out the work, and he expressed the view that the Chinese staff in the company could speak English and the foreign staff could speak Chinese and that they all had some knowledge of each other's culture contributed to the good intergroup relationship and work efficiency in the workplace. Such an environment should enable him to observe both the use of the host language and how it functions at work. He obviously paid close attention to the host language, and as shown earlier, not only did he demonstrate an awareness of the difference in language register between everyday Chinese and business Chinese, but was also able to establish a clear link between some linguistic features of Chinese language and ambiguity in communication. This is significant in terms of cross-cultural adaptation and communication. But as far as the current topic is concerned, his experience of working in China convinced him that a good knowledge of the host language was more than just a convenience and enabled him to develop an sensitivity to it.

In comparison, Informant E had a different work environment, where English was the main means of communication, as can be seen from his remark: "…in EAG bank the working language is English, everyone who works in EAG could speak perfect English. … there are people who work for EAG in London or Hong Kong, and when they come to China, and... with the help of the people in Beijing, to do deals in China

for EAG, ... things will get done… the deals… would be done." (InterviewNote-5:11) His experience thus led him to the following view:

> … strictly from the point of view if it is essential or not, it is not essential, because more and more people could speak English. But it doesn't mean it is not useful. To… if the meeting is in Chinese and you can listen to it and participate, and understand it. That's obviously useful, that might help you. But… I think now… nowadays… you wouldn't say it's essential in an organisation like that. (InterviewNote-5:11-12)

Although he pointed out that host language competence was not indispensable for the sort of work he did, he nevertheless thought it to be a useful means to get more deeply involved in work like participating in meetings conducted in the host language, etc. The difference between the two cases highlights the issues of contact environment and the relationship between language competence and other aspects of intercultural competence, although undeniably, personal difference has a lot to do with it.

In accordance with this example, one can see that with cultural awareness and the relevant skills it is possible to manage well communication with culturally different others without having sufficient knowledge of the other's language. From this perspective, provided that the two sides of communication have a shared means to get meaning across, what is essential for effective intercultural communication is the competence to manage extra-linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of intercultural communication, i.e., non-verbal norms, information insufficiency, intergroup relationships, different cultural assumptions, etc. However, language functions more than simply as a tool for transmitting meanings, it is related also to one's identities and emotions. To illustrate this I would like to refer to an example we had in profile A, where the informant deliberately used Chinese in social conversations with his Chinese colleagues as a means to show solidarity. He made the point explicitly that to speak his interlocutors' language was a way to show respect and win trust. In contrast, Pearson-Evans' (2006) research on Irish students in Japan shows an example where Irish is used by the students to signify their cultural identity. If one looks at the language issue from this perspective, it is clear that other issues like purpose of communication, the communicators' expectations of one another have to be taken into consideration in understanding communicational behaviours. It seems clear that one can manage communication adequately with a lingua franca, English in most cases, yet to be able to make deep adaptive changes, or to have deep understanding of the other's culture a good mastery of the other's language is necessary, although a good language competence itself does not equate to deep adaptive change.

The second issue here is the impact of environment on development of the host language competence. The data show that the different work environment, in addition to producing different views about learning the host language, seems to lead also to different levels of language awareness or sensitivity. Informant B appears to have a higher level of sensitivity to the host language, pointing out that business communication tends to be more formal, and in China people tend to use a lot of 'decorative' set phrases in business communication. Another two respondents to the second questionnaire were also able to see a difference in terms of using specialized vocabulary, including English words for their work. But the rest of the group seems to be less sensitive in this regard. I would suggest that apart from personal differences, there is likely a close relationship between environment and development of language sensitivity.

To look at the issue of learning environment from a more general perspective, the data show that even though the students were surrounded by host members, they still felt they had difficulties sometimes to practice their language skills with host members. Many of the respondents shared the opinion that some host members were interested only in practising their English with them rather than seeking friendship, not very helpful for them to learn Chinese. This view is echoed in Pearson-Evans' (2006) research on Irish students in Japan, and also in Ayano's (2006) longitudinal study on Japanese students in UK, where the Japanese students felt that some British students came to them only for the purpose of improving their Japanese. For these students, this sort of contact did not contribute too much to their language learning and it sometimes caused resentment.

On the other hand, in the current case, as a lot of people in China, especially in big cities, can and are willing to communicate in English to different degrees, it was easier for the students to get by with their everyday life, and in some cases to carry out their work, and thus less anxiety was caused by difficulties in communication and social adaptation. As the examples show, the students were able to communicate with host members in a lot of depth, and in some cases clearly with the help of English as the medium. Understandably, this would contribute to their satisfaction to their sojourn experience. Conversely, it could encourage interest and interactions. The data suggests another contributing factor to the high level of satisfaction. Apart from the general feeling of being received with politeness and kindness, one comment in the data suggests a positive self-esteem, even a feeling of cultural privilege, as some people "are

still slightly in 'awe' of us" (QI-No.5) In contrast to this case, the Japanese students in Ayano's study had more difficulties with communication and making cross-cultural adjustment due to language barriers, and probably less favourable social environment. There seems to be a relationship between the favourable environment, good level of social involvement and high level of satisfaction, and consequently good level of IC development.

In this chapter, a comparison was made of the different cases and more information was drawn from the questionnaires to further demonstrate the general attitudes and the level of cultural awareness of the whole group of the students involved in this investigation. The discussion brought to attention the following points:

- The five cases are representative of all the students being investigated, who demonstrate clearly a positive attitude towards their sojourn experience, awareness of the potential difficult nature of intercultural communication and a willingness to make adaptive changes.
- There are some differences between the five informants in terms of level of adaptation. The data indicate that all the informants can be said to be beyond the ethnocentric stages, some more firmly into the stage of adaptation, some having difficulties to shift perspectives sometimes, therefore with occasional regresses into denial or denigration, but obviously making adaptations. This suggests that it is risky to make event-based assessment only, as behaviour cannot be understood accurately without its context.
- Lack of sufficient cultural awareness and skills are identified as the major causes of the differences in adaptation. Self-awareness and the awareness of different expectations from culturally different others in behaviour affect one's perceptions and behaviours. The skills for eliciting meanings and mediating differences are identified as very important skills for intercultural communication, and interpersonal skills are also identified by the students as key skills for successful intercultural communication.
- With the level of interactions with the host members, the students were able to gain a lot of insights into the host culture, and more significantly, the perspectives of the host members – the most important aspect of cultural understanding. The data suggest that it is difficult to decentre without this deep understanding of the host culture. The work experience seems to be a rich source of cultural learning.

- There is some evidence of development of critical cultural awareness.
- The data suggest that the fact that English is used as a lingua franca in many places in China as well as in international organisations means that they had another means to communicate in addition to Chinese, and presumably that made life and work easier. On the other hand, some of them realised that it is possible to work effectively without having sufficient knowledge of the host language.
- Apart from their effort in adaptive changes, some of the environmental factors also seem to contribute to their satisfaction with host members. These factors include being able to use English in many places, being seemingly able to enjoy relative favourable culture status, and comparatively comfortable economic positions.
- The data also suggest that the ability to manage anxiety is very important to successful communication as well as sojourn.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

Having explained how and why this research was conducted and presented the way the data has been analysed, I can now summarise the outcomes of the research and discuss their implications. I will first discuss the outcomes of this research, examining whether my purposes in the study have been met, and then some issues related to IC development in general, such as learning environment, work experience, etc. The chapter will be concluded with a brief discussion on the two models used for the assessment, the use of which forms the major part of this research work and suggests a possibility of forming a kind of combined model for IC assessment.

8.1. Achievement and Further Development in IC

I explained in the Introduction and Chapter 5 that one aim of this study is to gain an understanding of a specific education context from the perspective of language and cultural learning, and much emphasis is placed on the assessment of IC development of the students, especially through their sojourn experience. This involves bringing together under a broad framework of IC development several different but related perspectives: educational objectives of language and cultural learning, globalisation and professional development, sojourn and experiential learning, and IC competence assessment.

In the first stage of this process, answers were found to part of my first research question - the role of cultural learning in language education and compatibility between the educational objective/s and the demand for professional competence from international business perspective. The literature reveals that both in the field of language education and in the business world in a wide sense an increasingly great amount of attention has been paid to IC development, which is defined as an important aspect of personal and social development. The role of cultural learning and IC development in a business oriented language course is thus identified. On this basis, I was able to proceed to address the other research questions: how to understand the intercultural experience of the students in terms of IC development, and its implications for further development in IC, especially through language learning.

We saw in Chapters 6 and 7 how the students managed interactions with their Chinese host members and how they perceived their intercultural experience. It appears

that the students in general handled very well communications as well as management of stress and relationships during their sojourn. Noticeably there is a high level of satisfaction with their experience and a seemingly good level of involvement in social interactions. With clear evidence I demonstrated the links between emotional satisfaction and effective management of relationships and communication with host members, and pointed out that the latter has a lot to do with the development of cultural awareness and intercultural skills. The data reveal that those who were more deeply involved in communications with host members showed obvious cultural awareness and demonstrated more clearly the skills of mediation and discovery. As we have seen, communication of this sort resulted in more satisfaction with the interactions and an understanding of the other's perspectives rather than superficial imitations of culturally determined behavioural norms. On the other hand, the data also suggest that without sufficient self-culture awareness and the skills to bridge the gap between different perspectives and views, even being highly motivated and having some knowledge of the other's culture, one would still experience misunderstandings and disappointments. I suggested that some of the difficulties that we saw in the data may be partly caused by insufficient understanding of cultural identity related issues, which are a major source of stereotyping and misattribution.

On the whole, the students made significant development in IC through their sojourn, and although there are individual differences, from their responses we saw positive attitudes, active engagement, some clear perceptual understandings and skills of handling intercultural difficulties. In accordance with the five dimensions of the ICC model, some of the students appeared to have met most of the criteria of the threshold level, demonstrating not only the attitudes, knowledge and skills to engage with otherness and to deal with differences, but also the attitudes, knowledge and skills to be self reflective and to take up new perspectives. In comparison, some others seemed to focus predominantly on politeness and showing respect for differences as the main strategy to engage with otherness, showing lack of sufficient cultural awareness and skills to elicit the other's views and to negotiate mutually acceptable views or solutions to their problems. In accordance with the concept of the DMIS model, the analysis suggests that although with occasional regresses for some, it can be said that all of them developed beyond the ethnocentric stages. Some appeared to show more of the characteristics of *acceptance*, acknowledging the different verbal and nonverbal behaviours and the values attached to them as viable variations, while others

demonstrated more clearly the features of *adaptation*, where the presence of communication skills is essential. In other words, some moved firmly into the stage of *adaptation*, which is characterised by the ability to empathise and to decentre, and some were swinging between the stages, sometimes having difficulties in meaning attributions.

The analysis suggests that broadly speaking, two aspects should be addressed for further development. The problems that we saw earlier in meaning attribution and contact avoidance indicate that for some of the students at least, it is necessary to increase self-cultural awareness and to improve the skills of mediation. As we can see from the examples given in Chapter 6, not having sufficient self awareness and the skills to establish shared meanings, it is easy to slip back to stereotyping and making ethnocentric judgements. On the other hand, although the students showed good knowledge and skills to manage their life in the new cultural environment, managing well with anxiety, communication and relationships, nonetheless, to be able to increase communication efficiency and to make better sociocultural adaptation, it is necessary to have a better understanding of the target culture (host culture) both in terms of the behavioural norms and their underlying cultural assumptions, such as the indirect communication styles, the ways people perceive and relate to each other and so on, with language being an obvious part of this. Only with good familiarity with different worldviews is it possible to integrate different perspectives and to develop critical understanding of the cultural assumptions and practices of both the target culture and the native culture. In the data, we saw some evidence, though not a great deal, of the development of critical cultural awareness. This is an indication of effort and abilities of some students to apply criteria of judgements that are based more on an understanding of fundamental human rights than on restrictions of cultural norms. It is also a sign that for some their knowledge of the host culture is far from superficial, and their development of IC is moving towards the higher stage, *integration* in DMIS. As this information came out in a spontaneous fashion, it is possible that if the issue were pursued further, more could be learnt in this regard.

8.2. Implications for Language and Business Language Teaching and Learning

The next question to be answered is how to understand the outcomes from the perspective of business language teaching. Let me start this with two comments from the students in responding to the question about what they thought useful for the

preparation for working abroad. One stated: "More consideration of the cultural differences, and help in overcoming them rather than just pointing out what they are." (QII-No.1) Another said: "A good understanding of the language is most important, and the desire to learn about a particular culture." (QII-No.2) The issues being raised, the importance of developing communicative competence, the desire to understand the other's culture and the need for knowledge and skills to solve problems caused by cultural differences, are indeed the issues that need to be addressed fully for further development in IC, specially from the perspective of business language teaching and learning. By saying this I mean that at this stage, the learner had already gained some clear ideas about the target culture and had accumulated some experience in dealing with cultural differences. What they were looking for is greater efficiency and greater confidence in handling cultural disparities and difficult situations. As shown in the two previous chapters, difficulties occur sometimes due to not being able to decipher either linguistically or non-linguistically the intended meanings of the other, which often represent the values and identities that matter very much to them. If care is not exercised, and attention is focused only on overt differences or trait features in isolation, there will be a danger of creating or strengthening stereotypes. In overcoming cultural differences it is necessary to understand not only what the differences are but also the causes of the differences. There is a common fallacy that there are some set formulas to be applied to problems as ready-made solutions, and once in possession of these, all one needs to do is to apply them to the situations that arise. As I am going to discuss below, it is necessary to raise awareness against taking a rigid approach in managing differences. On the other hand, "a good understanding of the language" requires both good insights into the culture and into the dialogic process of intercultural communication.

The preceding discussion shows that it is necessary to promote the competence of an intercultural speaker rather than a native speaker, and this entails that a different approach to foreign language teaching has to be used. Holding an intercultural perspective in language teaching, Kramsch (1993) stresses the importance of addressing the dynamic interpersonal process of communication, because the relationship between language and meaning is not given and meaning is created through social interactions between interlocutors. This means language teaching should take into consideration the dialogical process between different cultural assumptions. This approach could provide an antidote to stereotyping and encourage searching for new meanings. To put this into the perspective of the current case, in order to further raise cultural awareness, it would

be helpful to bring to the attention of the learner different factors that influence creation of meaning. For instance, a discussion of the ambiguity that is associated with Chinese communication styles could include the factors such as the interpersonal and intergroup relationships, the concept of relationship between individual and group in each of the cultures, etc. as well as addressing the linguistic features that are thought to contribute to the ambiguity of Chinese way of communication (Young, 1994). We saw in the profiles that the students had different experiences of and responses to the ambiguity of the Chinese communication style; for instance, some noticed the ambiguous nature of the language, and some noticed the strategies of indirectness and avoidance. If teaching could provide room for all of these to be adequately addressed it would help the learner to increase their linguistic sophistication in terms of what to say to whom, when and where and for what purpose.

In regard to business language learning the fact that the learners had some work experience in China means that they already had a taste of cross-cultural workplace and gained some insights into how work is conducted in a cross-cultural context. As shown earlier, some spotted different ways of handling conflicts, some commented on a few features of how business is conducted in China such as the extensive use of *guanxi* in business, doing business at dinner table, as well as the influence of bureaucracy on work efficacy, etc. My view is that at this stage the learners have learnt some observable features of the culture as well as their social implications in regard to work and business and developed some hypotheses about them, some of which are based on the insider's views as well. But they do not necessarily have clear ideas about the deeply seated values and beliefs being assumed by the insider. A research work by Tung shows that although the concept of *face* is not unique to Confucian societies, yet they attach much greater important to it, so much so that "face-giving and face-saving have developed into an elaborate art form." (1997:243) According to this research, *face* is contextual, so whether one feels his or her *face* is threatened very much depends on how he or she perceives the relationship and each other's social status. The point is that the students might need more insiders' knowledge about social roles and relationships. It seems logical that better understanding of the insider's perspectives and self reflection would be necessary, as it would help with consolidation of the existing knowledge and better understanding of the decisions and rational behind the communicative behaviours.

But as pointed out by Mughan (1998), it is a big challenge to incorporate culture learning into business language teaching. First of all, there is little consensus in regard

to what exactly business culture is about and what should be taught. Apart from that, there are also pedagogical problems. Based on a survey of business language teaching materials and some research on international organisation and work, he proposes that some of the approaches adopted in business training, such as learning the value orientations of the target culture and the discovery of cultural differences through critical incidents, can be incorporated into business language teaching to develop cultural awareness, as they address some root causes of the differences in work and business. Although intercultural training and language teaching have very different traditions, objectives, and require different methods and methodology in teaching, and therefore a full integration of the two is not easy to achieve, yet he stresses that it is both necessary and possible to adapt teaching in such a way that some fundamental concepts regarding human relationships and social contexts can be explored. He proposes that a sort of cultural grammar can be established on the basis of Hofstede's and Trompenaars' value dimensions for business language learning. We can see from the above discussion that such an approach can help the learner to see the dynamic nature of social interaction and to increase cultural sensitivity as long as it can be implemented effectively. But it is important for those involved in teaching to exercise caution against stereotyping as it is necessary for this value variants approach to reduce cultural complexity to the basic value orientations.

In regard to pedagogy, there has been some effort and new thinking in integrating language and culture in business language teaching. One such an attempt is Zhu's (2001) new way of teaching business letter writing. Based on the concept of knowledge building, Zhu tries to combine cultural analyses with genre analysis in understanding how cultural assumptions such as politeness, face-keeping affect the style of a business letter. Louhiala-Salminen (1996), on the other hand, points out that thanks to the fast development of communicational technology the traditional business letter has increasingly been replaced by fax, e-mails, which tend to be less formal and more spontaneous, and according to Gimenez (2000), the impact of electronic mediated communication on business written communication has resulted in a more flexible register in business writing. Although these studies pay no special attention to cultural learning, its conclusion that more attention should be paid to the writing process and "real communication problems" in teaching suggests that much rethinking has to be done about what is needed by the learner.

To return to what Mughan says about the cultural grammar, it seems that the fundamental value orientations between cultures can be addressed at every level of language learning, though not necessarily in a systematic fashion, but in a spiral progression. It could mean that through examination of relationships and social contexts from different perspectives in language learning, such as workplace relationships and behaviours (e.g., between subordinate and superior and between ingroups and outgroups), business letters and documents (taking into consideration of the emerging new genre as a consequence of electronic communication), negotiation styles, the learner could become increasingly sensitive to cultural differences and more sophisticated linguistically.

8.3. Issues Related to IC Development and the Two Models

In addition to what has been said about the outcomes of the research, there are a few other issues that I think are worth mentioning as well. Firstly, it seems to me that the one-year study abroad is really a productive way of developing intercultural competence. In comparison with a research on short-term study, which shows that the students made limited progress in intercultural sensitivity development (Anderson *et al.* 2006; Tarp, 2006), it is evident that the students in this case gained good experience in managing anxiety, communication and cross-cultural relationships during their sojourn. Through this experience they obtained a lot of confidence as well as a broader view of the world reality. It is interesting that sometimes they thought the views about the outsider world from some other students who had never been abroad were naïve. The data suggest that their work experience provided a good access to host community and opportunity to learn. But as this research has focused only on work environment and work-related behaviours and has paid no attention to other situations, it is not clear to what extent it contributed to their management of sociocultural and psychological adaptation, as well as IC development. I think it would be worthwhile to pursue further investigation the value of work experience and its relationship to other aspects of the year of study abroad.

Another issue is about contact environment, about which I had a brief discussion in the last chapter. There is a noticeably good level of satisfaction towards the sojourn experience in general, which I think is due to a combination of factors. I mentioned already that the relative convenience of being able to communicate in English and their seemingly favourable cultural status contributed to positive emotions. There could be

other reasons too. One could be that the academic pressure was relatively not too heavy. Although the students paid a lot of attention to their studies and tried to make use of all the opportunities to improve their learning, as although they did take exams in the host university, their examination results would not be officially recorded as part of their degree result, it was not too huge a burden. Also, they were economically in a good position due to the exchange rate, and could afford to have good food and to travel. Also, apart from making friends with host members, many of them were very supportive to each other and also made some friends with other international students.

An important aspect of this investigation is to assess the IC development of the students. Assessment of IC is one of the major un-resolved issues of intercultural studies, and this attempt of combining two models for assessment will add to the understanding of the issue and invite more research in this aspect. In regard to the combination of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity and the ICC model, as far as I am concerned, it is a worthwhile experiment, although I have not been able to apply them in a fully integrated manner and to use them most effectively. But the benefits of this combined approach, in my view, are by no means negligible in several aspects.

First, as has been said before, it allows a wider perspective both in terms of the means to process data and in terms of theoretical understanding. With regard to the latter, the comprehensive synchronic view provided by the ICC model and the linear progressive view by DMIS allow better insights into the issue of IC development, and consequently, in data processing, especially being facilitated by both the detailed descriptors of different aspects of competence under the categories of five *savoir* from ICC model, and the differentiation of the different kinds of responses to cultural differences, such as *denial*, *acceptance*, *adaptation*, etc. from DMIS, this approach enables deeper understanding and better interpretations of data.

Second, this combined approach can help to see better the links between different aspects of competence development. While the five *savoir* provide a clear view of the relations between motivation, knowledge and skills, the description of move from lower level to higher level of competence can help to understand some consequences of presence or absence of different components of the competence, shedding light on how and why some problems occur or how and why people behave in the way they do, and subsequently the possibility of finding solutions to problems. That is to say, with a

better view of the interactions of internal and external characteristics of intercultural competence, it is possible for assessment to be carried out in a manner that is more than addressing issues at a surface level or as isolated occurrences.

Third, sitting in different disciplines, the two models show some differences in orientation. DMIS focuses on the process of cognitive development of intercultural interactions, while ICC model shows a clear commitment to educational objectives. In other words, one pays more attention to achieving the desired outcomes while the other concerns more about key features of changes. Although this does not benefit assessment other than providing a wider perspective, it however, makes very clear the role of language education in the drive to develop IC competence in young people.

Finally, perhaps to some extent due to the way that I used the two models in combination, from different perspectives they show a similar result in assessment, and thus complement each other, adding more complexity to each other and perhaps ultimately showing that what is needed is a combined model for assessment purposes. What is interesting is that those who appeared less developed in intercultural sensitivity tended to show a relatively lower level of cultural awareness and a lack of the skills to mediation, which seems to suggest that a move from *acceptance* to *adaptation* involves the knowledge and skills to manage sensitive relationships between self and others rather than simply have factual knowledge of the new culture. For me, the two different perspectives helped me to see more clearly the data, and gained some insights into the movement between the different levels of development. The result shows a match between the ICC model and DMIS model, one prescriptive and descriptive. These outcomes suggest that it may be worthwhile to look further into the issue of making a combined model for IC assessment.

Appendix I – First Questionnaire

Observing Chinese Culture – Experiences in China

Questionnaire (1)

Name:
Time:

(Thank you for taking time to complete this questionnaire. Note that your names will be kept completely confidential. The purpose of requesting them is strictly for data classification.)

1) Which of the following statements best describes your experiences in Beijing?
   a) Exciting and happy
   b) Exciting but also stressful sometimes
   c) Frustrating and terrifying
   d) Not much different from experiences had elsewhere
   e) Other statement/s:

   _____

2) To what extent have your experiences in Beijing differed from your expectations?
   a) Not different
   b) Different - better than expected
   c) Different – worse than expected
   d) Completely different
   e) Other statement/s:

   _____.

3) Please write in descending order the relative importance of the following factors in making your sojourn successful (and anything you think relevant).
   a) Food
   b) Hygiene
   c) Safety
   d) Good learning environment
   e) Good relationships with both fellow students and locals
   f) Competence in study/work
   g) Skills to communicate with the native
   h) Being open to different views and concept
   i) Good living conditions

4) If you were not very interested in an invitation from a Chinese friend what would you do?
   a) Find an excuse not to go
   b) Show directly that you are not interested
   c) Go reluctantly
   d) Accept the invitation but don't go
   e) Others (specify)

5) To what extent do you think the regulations and laws that you are required to follow in your new environment are similar to those you have to apply in your own country and your own university? Please specify what and how you think differently in the space provided below.
   a) Exactly the same
   b) Pretty much the same
   c) A lot in common
   d) Very different

_____.

6) What do you think of the work efficiency of the organisations and authorities that you contacted there in comparison with those in your country?
   a) More efficient
   b) Less efficient
   c) With same efficiency
   d) Can't be compared

7) To what extent do you think your interaction with Chinese people has changed your perception of the target culture?
   a) Not at all
   b) Very little
   c) To limited extent
   d) Considerably

8) To what extent do you think your interaction with Chinese people has changed your behaviour?
   a) Not at all
   b) Very little
   c) To limited extent
   d) Considerably

9) How would you describe your interaction with Chinese people and why?
   a) I sometimes find it easy to communicate with Chinese people because

_____

_____

_____.

   b) I sometimes find it difficult to communicate with Chinese people because

_____

_____

_____.

   c) I avoid as much as possible any social interactions with Chinese people because

_____

_____

_____.

10) Apart from linguistic efficiency, what else do you think is important in terms of ability to communicate effectively with Chinese people? Please specify.

_____

_____

_____.

11) Do you think your Chinese friends treat you in the same way they treat their Chinese friends, and have the same level of expectation from you in terms of behaviour and empathy? Please give examples of being treated differently or the same.

_____

_____

_____.

12) Are you aware of any topics that are avoided by Chinese people in conversations with you? If yes, please specify what they are and why you have this feeling.

_____

_____

_____.

13) Are there any behaviours of Chinese people that appears strange and incomprehensible to you? Please specify.

_____

_____

_____.

14) Do you know if any of your behaviours are interpreted differently by Chinese people from what you would expect? Please give examples.

_____

_____

_____.

15) Are there any behaviours of Chinese people that appears inappropriate, even offensive to you? Please specify.

_____

_____

_____.

16) Has it ever happened that you unintentionally caused offence to your Chinese friends or other Chinese people because each of the two sides perceives your action differently? If yes, please specify how they understand things differently.

_____

_____

_____.

17) If you found yourself in a difficult situation with Chinese people (perhaps because of conflicting ideas) how would you respond?

_____

_____

_____.

18) What do you think of the public services in Beijing? (e.g. public library, public transport, etc.)

_____

_____

_____.

19) How different do you think your life is from that of Chinese students?

_____

_____

_____.

Appendix II – Second Questionnaire

Observing Chinese Culture – Experiences in China

Questionnaire (2)

(Thank you very much for your response for the first questionnaire, and thank you for taking time to complete this one. Note that your name will be kept completely confidential and under no circumstances will be used without your consent. The purpose of requesting them is strictly for data classification.)

Part A: Questions in General

1. What is the nature of your work?

   □ clerical □ technical

   □ service □ educational

   □ other (please specify):

   _____.

2. Are you happy with your work?

   □ very happy □ quite happy □ not very happy □ very unhappy

3. To what degree do you think your work experience is valuable?

   □ very valuable □ quite valuable □ not too much value □ no value at all

4. Why do you think the experience is valuable/not valuable to you?

   _____

   _____.

5. How would you describe in general the relationship you've established with the people you have worked with?

   □ very good □ quite good □ poor

   □ not having enough relationship to make judgement

6. Do you think extra effort is needed to establish a good relationship with the Chinese people you have worked with?

   □ yes □ no □ not sure □ N/A

7. If your answer to question 4 (*) is 'yes', please state your reason(s) briefly.

   _____

   _____.

8. Do you think your work efficiency would be higher if you worked with people you share the same culture with rather than people whose culture is different?

□ yes □ no □ not sure

State your reason(s): _____

_____.

9. Do you think you would be happier working with people whose culture is the same rather than with those you don't share the culture with?

□ yes □ no □ not sure

10. Do you think the Chinese people whom you work with treat you as one of them?

□ yes □ no □ not sure

11. How typical do you think your experience is?

□ very typical □ not very typical □ very exceptional □ not sure

12. Do you think you've met the expectations of the Chinese people whom you have worked with in terms of social behaviour?

□ yes □ no □ not sure

State your reason/s: _____

_____.

13. Do you think a good knowledge of Chinese language is essential for carrying out your job successfully?

□ yes □ no □ not sure

14. Is there any difference between the everyday use of the Chinese language and the language used for business purpose?

□ yes □ no □ not sure

15. If your answer to the question above is 'yes', then in what way is it different?

_____

_____.

16. To what degree do you think your experience of working in China has changed your perception of the social, economic and political environment of the society?

□ considerably □ very little □ not at all □ not sure

17. To what degree do you think your experience of working in China has enriched your understanding of Chinese culture?

□ considerably □ very little □ not at all □ not sure

18. To what degree do you think your experience of working in China has enriched your understanding of your own culture?

□ considerably □ very little □ not at all □ not sure

19. To what degree do you think your experience of working in China has changed your perception of cross-cultural communication?

□ considerably □ very little □ not at all □ not sure

20. What do you think you would ideally like to have for the preparation for working aboard?

_____

_____

_____.

21. Is there anything that you would think essential for the success of working with Chinese people?

_____

_____.

22. Do you think your experience of working in China will be beneficial to your future work?

□ yes □ no □ not sure

State your reason(s): _____

_____.

Part B: Questions Related to Organisational Behaviours

1. What type of establishment/business do you work for?

□ state-run □ private □ foreign owned □ joint venture

□ other (specify): _____.

2. What is the proportion of Chinese staff in the establishment?

□ none □ less than 5% □ less than 10%

□ less than 25% □ more than 50%

3. What is the formation of the management body?

1) top management: □ Chinese only □ expatriate/s only □ mixture

2) middle management: □ Chinese only □ expatriate/s only □ mixture

3) lower management: □ Chinese only □ expatriate/s only □ mixture

4) N/A

4. In your opinion is the management efficient?

□ yes □ no □ not sure □ N/A

5. In your opinion what the management style is likely to be?

□ Chinese □ Western □ Japanese

□ mixture □ not sure □ N/A

□ other (specify): _____.

6. Do you think that there is a good co-operative relationship between the Chinese staff and the foreign staff in the establishment?

□ yes □ no □ not sure □ N/A

7. If your answer to the question above is 'no', what do you think the problem/s could be?

_____

_____

8. Do you think that there is a good co-ordination between different levels of management?

□ yes □ no □ not sure □ N/A

9. Is there any mechanism that enables people at the lower end of the power structure in the establishment to get their voice heard, or to exert influence on decision making?

□ yes □ no □ not sure □ N/A

10. Which of the following do you think is more appropriate for describing the atmosphere of the workplace?

□ competitive □ harmonious □ disorganised and ill-disciplined

□ other (specify) _____.

11. Do you think it is commonly acceptable in your workplace for people to bypass their immediate superior to raise their opinions to a higher level?

□ yes □ no □ not sure □ N/A

12. Do you think there is a sufficient communication between the management and the general workforce so that the staff is well informed about the general situation and operation of the organisation as well as their own performance?

□ yes □ no □ not sure □ N/A

13. If your answer to the question above is 'yes', how do you think the communication is carried out? (You can tick more than one answer)

□ through more formal means, such as consultation meetings, notice-board, letters, etc.

□ through informal means, such as informal talk, telephone call

□ through a mechanism which enables a constant communication between management and work force, e.g. consultation committee, level by level…

□ others (specify): _____.

□ I don't know/ N/A

14. If your answer to question 12 is 'no', what do you think impede the communication?

_____

_____.

15. Do you think the staff in the organisation is encouraged to make their own independent judgement and decision in their work?

□ yes □ no □ not sure □ N/A

16. Do you think the staff of the organisation has adequate level of education for their work?

1) top management staff: □ yes □ no □ I don't know

2) middle management staff: □ yes □ no □ I don't know

3) technical stall: □ yes □ no □ I don't know

4) general staff: □ yes □ no □ I don't know

5) N/A

Comment if any: _____

_____.

17. Do you think it is obvious that ability is the number one criterion for getting promotion in the establishment?

□ yes □ no □ not sure □ N/A

18. Which of the following begets most respect from others:

□ age □ power □ ability □ wealth □ moral quality

19. Is there any mechanism to protect members of the workforce with respect to their rights and interests?

□ yes □ no □ not sure □ N/A

20. Do you think women enjoy equal treatment as their male colleagues in the establishment?

□ yes □ no □ not sure □ N/A

Part C: Cross-Cultural Communication

1. Do you think cultural differences between different cultural groups in the establishment have created problems for a smooth operation of the organisation?

□ yes □ no □ I don't know □ N/A

2. If your answer to the question above is 'yes', what in your opinion could be the cause of the problem? (You can tick more than one answer)

□ misunderstanding □ mistrust □ personal dislike

□ conflict interest □ lack of communication

□ other (specify): _____.

3. Facing a conflict in a workplace, do you expect a Chinese person would behave the same way as you would?

□ yes □ no □ not sure

4. If you made a mistake in your work, what do you think your Chinese colleagues would likely to do?

□ point it out directly □ point it out indirectly □ report to someone in charge

□ keep silence □ not sure

□ other (specify): _____.

5. Would you take the same action when you see a Chinese colleague who makes a mistake as you would when you see an expatriate from your country who makes a mistake?

□ yes □ no □ not sure

6. If there is a conflict between self interest and group interest, which of the following actions would be most likely to be expected from your culture?

□ place self interest first □ place group interest first

□ entirely up to the individual □ not sure

7. If there is a conflict between self interest and group interest, which of the following actions in your opinion would be most likely to be expected from Chinese culture?

□ place self interest first □ place group interest first

□ entirely up to individual □ not sure

8. Are the rules and regulations explicit on the expected behaviours in your workplace?

□ yes □ no □ not sure □ N/A

9. When communicating with Chinese people have you ever encountered any difficulties of not knowing the real intention of the speaker despite of the overt explicit expressions?

□ yes □ no □ not sure

10. If your answer is 'yes', please exemplify: _____

_____.

11. Which of the following statements do you agree?

□ Chinese way of communication is more ambiguous than that in your culture

□ Chinese way of communication is less ambiguous than that in your culture

□ Chinese way of communication is just as ambiguous as that in your culture

□ Chinese way of communication is just as explicit as that in your culture

12. Do you think peoples' attitude and behaviour towards power and authority is the same in Chinese culture as in your home culture?

□ yes □ no □ not sure

13. Do you think peoples' attitude and behaviour towards 'outgroups' is more or less the same in your culture and Chinese culture?

□ yes □ no □ not sure

14. Do you agree with the statement that to create a harmonious atmosphere is more important than competition in Chinese culture?

□ yes □ no □ not sure

15. Is privacy respected in the same way in Chinese culture as in your home culture?

□ yes □ no □ not sure

16. Do you experience same level of eye contact and body language from Chinese people as you do from people of your own culture?

□ yes □ no □ not sure

17. Is there any difference in the way language is used between peers and between superior and subordinate?

□ yes □ no □ not sure
Please specify if your answer is 'yes': _____

_____.

18. How important do you think 'GUANXI' (social connection) is in Chinese culture?

□ very important □ quite important □ not very important □ no importance

19. When you have any query or problems in your work whom would you turn to for help?

□ friends □ people in charge of the work □ anyone □ N/A

20. How different do you think the younger generation of Chinese is from their elders in terms of behaviour?

□ very different □ quite different □ little difference □ nothing in common

Appendix III – Interview Questions

Interview Questions (October 2001)

Informant A

1. You were confident that you had met the expectations of your Chinese colleagues, because, in your words, "I have socialised with them in Chinese style. Have repaid their favours / kindness." Could you be a bit more specific about what you described as the 'Chinese style'? / Why do you think it important to adopt their style when socialise with them?

2. You stated that the co-operative relationship was negatively affected by a misunderstanding of each other's working patterns. What were the differences in the working patterns? / Was there any awareness of the differences on both sides?

3. You said because it is rather ambiguous the way Chinese people communicate, sometimes it was difficult to know the real intention of the speaker, as you said: "tradition of saying one thing, really meaning another." Then how did you manage to find out the real meaning behind the linguistic message, as it were? / How do you think your understanding of this difference enables you to be more effective in your communication with a Chinese interlocutor?

4. According to your reply, seeing someone making a mistake, you would act in accordance with whether the doer is a Chinese person or an expatriate. What would you do in each case and why?

5. You expressed that you didn't expect a Chinese person approach a conflict in the same way as you would. Could you tell me a bit more about how and why?

6. Imagine you were given a task to negotiate a deal in China, and your boss knew nothing about China. He expects the task to be completed speedily with all the conditions met, but he might not appreciate any potential obstacles created by cultural differences, in order to get necessary support and not to be blamed for incompetent, what would you like your boss to be aware of?

7. After your stay in China and your work experience there, what do you think will be useful for us to cover in our Business Chinese course in terms of developing competence in working and doing business internationally?

8. You mentioned that in building up relationship with your Chinese colleagues you made extra effort so as to win their trust. Could you please tell me more about how did you manage to win their trust?

9. You noticed that Guanxi (connections) plays a big role in social relationships in Chinese culture. Do you think it could in anyway affect the way in which an 'outsider' works with Chinese people or works in China? Can you give any examples? / Do you think this and what you said above about winning the trust should be included in a business language learning course? / How?

10. Is there anything that you feel difficult to get used to in terms of socialising with Chinese people and working with Chinese people?

11. From your point of view, what people should pay attention to if they wish to be successful in communicating with Chinese people?

12. Can you tell me what did you feel when coming back to UK? Did everything appear the same as before?

Informant B

1. According to what you said your year in China has resulted in changes in your perception of cross-cultural communication. Could you tell me a bit more about the change? / (Did you pay special attention to the way you behave and the way Chinese people behave, and did you try to find out how you and others cope with the differences, for example?)

2. You agreed that the way Chinese people communicate is more ambiguous in comparison with that of yours. Could you give a couple of examples of it and give me your view of why the Chinese people tend to be more tolerant towards ambiguity?

3. From your answers in the questionnaire I feel that the co-operations between Chinese and foreign staff and between different levels of management were quite good and the operation of the establishment therefore was effective. Are you aware of any effort being made to ensure effective communication both on the individual level and organisational level?

4. Imagine you were given a task to negotiate a deal in China, and your boss knew nothing about China. He expects the task to be completed speedily with all the conditions met, but he might not appreciate any potential obstacles created by cultural differences, in order to get necessary support and not to be blamed for incompetent, what would you like your boss to be aware of?

5. You noticed that Guanxi (connections) plays a big role in social relationships in Chinese culture. Do you think it could in anyway affect the way in which an 'outsider' works with Chinese people or works in China? Can you give any examples?

6. After your stay in China and your work experience there, what do you think will be useful for us to cover in our Business Chinese course in terms of developing competence in working and doing business internationally?

7. You expressed that facing a conflict, a Chinese person in your workplace would behave in a different way as you would. Could you give me an example, or speculate what a Chinese person would be likely to do and how different that is from your own?

8. There is a question in the second questionnaire about whether you would take the same action when spotting a mistake done by a Chinese colleague and in case of an expatriate colleague. Your answer is that you would take the same action in both of the cases. The question perhaps it is not well phrased. What I intended to ask is whether you would point out the mistake in a same manner. Could you tell me what would you be likely to do and why?

9. Is there anything that you feel difficult to get used to in terms of socialising with Chinese people and working with Chinese people?

10. Your reply shows that you believed the younger generation in China is quite different from the older one. Can you tell me more about in what way they are different?

11. Have you tried to find out any answer to why privacy is not highly valued in Chinese culture?

Informant C

1. In the questionnaire you said that facing a conflict you would try to find a diplomatic solution to it, but try to avoid any conflict in the first place. How well did you find this approach worked for you? / Were you always sure what to do to get the expected responses and outcome? / In your experience what could be the potential causes of conflicts between Chinese people and Westerners? Can you think of any examples?

2. In your answer you agreed with the statement that the way in which Chinese communicate is more ambiguous than yours, how did that affect you in your communication with them? /Could you think of a couple of examples and any explanation of why the Chinese way of communication appears more ambiguous to you and other people of your culture?

3. (Despite the ambiguity of the way Chinese communicate, according to the answers to the questionnaire you didn't think you had any problem in recognising the real intention of a Chinese speaker. How did you manage it?) / Did it ever worry you that you might misunderstand your interlocutor?

4. In the first questionnaire you stated that as a foreigner your Chinese friends treated you with more politeness than their Chinese friends. In the second questionnaire, I got the impression that your Chinese colleagues were not very accommodating, because you found them to be suspicious of foreigners. What do you think to be the reason/s for the difference? / (Do you think the difference in attitude is due to personal difference or any other reasons? / (Do you think it is because your Chinese friends are different from your colleagues, or because your Chinese friends are closer to you in relationship and understand you better?) / (As the friendship between you and your Chinese friends gets deeper, do you still have the feeling of being treated more politely than others?)

5. Imagine you were given a task to negotiate a deal in China, and your boss knew nothing about China. He expects the task to be completed speedily with all the conditions met, but he might not appreciate any potential obstacles created by cultural differences, in order to get necessary support and not to be blamed for incompetent, what would you like your boss to be aware of?

6. You noticed that Guanxi (connections) plays a big role in social relationships in Chinese culture. Do you think it could in anyway affect the way in which an 'outsider' works with Chinese people or works in China? Can you give any examples?

7. After your stay in China and your work experience there, what do you think will be useful for us to cover in our Business Chinese course in terms of developing competence in working and doing business internationally?

8. You mentioned in your questionnaire that some Chinese people tended to avoid having contact with foreigners because of a fear of the unknown or because of a xenophobic attitude. What did you tend to do in this kind of situation? / (In case you have to work in such a situation, what would you do?) And examples?

9. Is there anything that you feel difficult to get used to in terms of socialising with Chinese people and working with Chinese people?

10. According to what you said, the workplace that you were in did not provide much opportunity for ordinary employees to air their views. Do you think that's typical in Chinese culture?

Informant D

1. To the question of meeting the expectations of the Chinese colleagues, you said: " I don't know if they expect me to behave as one of them or as a 'foreigner', therefore with different social behaviour." Did it bother you not knowing what the other party was expecting of you?

2. When you work in China, did you notice any difference in work ethos and working patterns between Chinese staff and Western staff?

3. According to your reply, you believe that in your culture people's attitude and behaviour toward authority is different from that in Chinese culture. Could you please tell me more about it?

4. Also, you believed that the two cultures are not the same in terms of attitude and behaviour towards "out-group". Could you be more specific about it?

5. You thought that Chinese people are expected to put group interest before self-interest. Why do you think there should be such an expectation of individuals? /

6. Imagine you were given a task to negotiate a deal in China, and your boss knew nothing about China. He expects the task to be completed speedily with all the conditions met, but he might not appreciate any potential obstacles created by cultural differences, in order to get necessary support and not to be blamed for incompetent, what would you like your boss to be aware of?

7. You noticed that Guanxi (connections) plays a big role in social relationships in Chinese culture. Do you think it could in anyway affect the way in which an 'outsider' works with Chinese people or works in China? Can you give any examples?

8. After your stay in China and your work experience there, what do you think will be useful for us to cover in our Business Chinese course in terms of developing competence in working and doing business internationally?

9. Is there anything that you feel difficult to get used to in terms of socialising with Chinese people and working with Chinese people?

10. It's said that Chinese people tend to be indirect in express their negative opinions. They also tend to be indirect in making request. What's your view about this?

11. Have you tried to find out any answer to why privacy is not very highly valued in Chinese culture?

12. In what way do you think Chinese culture is very different from yours?

Informant E

1. You agreed that Guanxi plays an important role in social relations and social interactions in Chinese culture. What is your view about it? / What could be the implications for people who come from different cultural framework working in China?

2. According to your reply, seeing someone making a mistake, you would act in accordance with whether the doer is a Chinese person or an expatriate. What would you do in each case and why?

3. You expressed that sometimes you encountered difficulties in knowing the real intention of a Chinese speaker despite of the overt explicitness. Because "sometimes people have not fulfilled their explicit promises." Have you tried to find out the reason/s why they behaved that way? / Could you give me a couple of examples of it?

4. You believed that if you made a mistake, your Chinese colleagues would pointed it out indirectly rather than adopting a direct approach. Why do you think a indirect approach is preferred by your Chinese colleagues and do you think it a common phenomenon in Chinese culture to employ indirect approach?

5. You believed that in your workplace problems occurred due to cultural differences between the staff, as the differences could result in misunderstanding. Could you tell me a couple of examples?

6. Imagine you were given a task to negotiate a deal in China, and your boss knew nothing about China. He expects the task to be completed speedily with all the conditions met, but he might not appreciate any potential obstacles created by cultural differences, in order to get necessary support and not to be blamed for incompetent, what would you like your boss to be aware of?

7. After your stay in China and your work experience there, what do you think will be useful for us to cover in our Business Chinese course in terms of developing competence in working and doing business internationally?

8. Your answer shows that you believed that power begets most respect in Chinese culture. Could you be more specific about behaviours and attitudes towards power in Chinese culture? / How do you think we can include it in our course?

9. Is there anything that you feel difficult to get used to in terms of socialising with Chinese people and working with Chinese people?

10. From your point of view, what people should pay attention to if they wish to be successful in communicating with Chinese people?

11. You noticed that Guanxi (connections) plays a big role in social relationships in Chinese culture. Do you think it could in anyway affect the way in which an 'outsider' works with Chinese people or works in China? Can you give any examples? / Do you think this and what you said above about winning the trust should be included in a business language learning course? / How?

12. From your point of view, what people should pay attention to if they wish to be successful in communicating with Chinese people?

13. Can you tell me what did you feel when coming back to UK? Did everything appear the same as before? /

14. You didn't agree that a good knowledge of language is essential for carrying out the job successfully. Why is that? / What is the most important thing to know in terms of being competent in the work?

Appendix IV – Sample Interview

Interview Note 3 (October 2001)

Interviewee: Informant D
Venue: office
Itr = interviewer; Itee = interviewee

Itr: (In Chinese: The first question is…) let me read the question: To the question of meeting the expectations of the Chinese colleagues, you said: I don't know if they expected me to behave as one of them or as a foreigner, is it right? (Itee: I think so. Yes.) Yes. Therefore with different social behaviours, did it bother you not knowing what the other party is expecting of you?

Itee: Um… Oh, you want me to answer now? Ah, right… It didn't… after a while it didn't bother me not knowing what they expected of us. Um… this is specifically with regard to work, because after a while, after a few weeks, I found out that they just… I was a foreigner, so they expected me to do strange things all the time anyway. They didn't expect to understand why I said and did what I did. And they just liked me as a friend, without… even though we have different ways of doing work, or getting things done. So at first, it was a bit strange, not knowing… I would do it one way… and then… I didn't know whether they were displeased… or whether they just accepted that I just do something differently.

Itr: Right, so they didn't try to tell you what they are thinking about what you are doing?

Itee: No, they always, they always accepted what I did, um…because I was a girl of West, because I was a Westerner. They just accepted that it's my way of doing it, which… they didn't…

Itr: Right. Do you think they… they really understand what you are doing?

Inee: No, not… no.

Itr: Not really. Yes. Do you… do you expect them to tell you constantly… what… what you are doing is… um what…is accepted there? Or you just think… well, I just do what I like to do…

Itee: Um sometimes they'd tell me, but... when they were my friends. So then they would be more likely to say: Oh, we do it like this, but it is really interesting that you've done it differently, or you've said something differently. But most of the time… they didn't say much. I think it is because the person in charge, the highest person in charge was Western, well, Australian, so that's the person who told me what to do, and everyone that I was with was just on my level, or did… or had a slightly different job. So… they didn't feel they had to tell me: you must do it like this.

Itr: Yes. And on the social aspect, do you think sometimes they expect you to behave… more… just, you know, as somebody who knows a lot about Chinese culture or… they just expect you… or don't very much…

Itee: I think they…Yeah, I don't think they expected very much. They didn't expect me to know anything, really. So they just probably assume that because I was a Westerner, I don't know… anything.

Itr: Right. OK, that's good. And… when you worked in China, did you noticed any difference in work ethos or working patterns between Chinese staff and Western staff?

Itee: Um… (Itr: You said you worked differently…) Yes, I think the Chinese staff would never question… they never questioned… anything if they were told to do something... They rarely questioned why um… Sometimes they would know if they were asked to do something, perhaps on computer or telephone someone, and they knew that there were some reasons that they couldn't do this, or it had already done, or it should do in a different way, but they rarely would question directly, or say immediately: **Oh, I've done it already**, or… **it should be done… so and so had told me it should be done like this**. They might wait a bit, and came back in half an hour and say: Oh, I can't do it like this. Or… they didn't question… especially, I think, because the boss was Western… editor, so they didn't question her directly. But some of the staff was much more westernized… they were much more used to working with this Australian boss, and they were completely different. They were much more sort of **I don't think I should do it like that**… more like that…

Itr: So they did change their behaviour a bit. Yeah. But… um when they… when they didn't… when you say that they just go and wait for half an hour and come back to say that… they know… or when they've heard about it… it is not the right thing to do, or … with… something has (already) been done, or whatever… they are clear about that, but they just wait and to respond later?

Itee: Yeah, or sometimes they just go away and speak to someone also about it, and then come back… or… rather than question the authority directly and immediately…They might sort of say… speaking to somebody, might a Chinese person, and they might come back to say: Oh, actually I don't think we can do that…

Itr: Right. So you think you wouldn't do it that way?

Itee: No. I think also I had a slightly different relationship with the boss, because she was Australian, I was more friendly with her than she was with some of the Chinese people, because she didn't speak very good Chinese. So it was slightly different. So I'd be more likely to say… um… Oh, I don't … I think that's really a silly idea, and perhaps we should change this… immediately, because I didn't worry, it wasn't my proper job, so I didn't have to worry about that, whilst for them… they stay like… it was more a hierarchy…

Itr: Right. So… all the people speak… English?

Itee: Yes, some of them didn't speak very well.

Itr: But they have to communicate with the boss?

Itee: Yeah.

Itr: So did it… did that affect the relationship or anything, because… people… sometimes they don't understand the boss, do you think…?

Itee: Yes. I think, a lot. Because in the office where I worked, there were two people who were very involved in computers, because it was a magazine, and they were doing all the pictographic on the screen, making it bigger or smaller, changing the colours sort of things. And the boss was concerned more with the writing. And sometimes if she was angry, or just stressed she might say in English very quickly: Oh you mustn't do it like this, and she might use a few words of Chinese, but not really enough for… and they wouldn't understand. Um… and then they would go out to find someone who speak Chinese who worked in a different office, and he would come in and explain the situation, and the boss got: Oh, oh fine, and then go back to do something else. So sometimes there was confusion over…

Itr. Yes, that's… sometimes you need somebody to go… to help them to understand each other. And also… according to your reply, you believe that in your culture people's attitude and

behaviour towards authority is different from that in Chinese culture, right? Um… could you please tell me more about it… in terms of attitude and behaviour towards authority?

Itee: Well, partly at work, people um… especially the new staff, because it is a Western company, some of those who had been there for long time and more Western in their attitude, or they would be more used to the… working with this Australian boss. While some of the newer ones were very much… much more respectful of the authority… and much… less likely to challenge or question… the decision about what they had to do. And just having Chinese friends… um… I think they are certainly more respectful towards their teachers. When you think that we are now older, we are at university, it is not like at school, and in England we have a much more equal…with our teachers and professors we tend to be more at an equal level, more talking and discussion… questioning. While there a lot of Chinese students, I found out, my friends, the Chinese friends I had… it's very much the teacher… was the teacher… who told you… what you have to learn. They were much more respectful… more wary perhaps… of authority.

Itr: Yes, authority… yes, another level, do you think… they have to demonstrate… the authority or they don't question about what the authority says… in you…?

Itee: I think some of the Chinese are like that. Some of my friends, close friends didn't… they didn't question the authority of the newspapers, or the government, or the police. There was never any… they might, maybe the teachers, the parents, more and more younger people would… say, I think compared to 30 years ago in China young people are Westernised in their ideas. But with regards to the authority of the newspapers to say things, the police to… to do things, or the government… there was no questioning. They never doubted it or… when we had private discussion about things. And that's it.

Itr: Yes. Do you think they um… in their view… you are very… you are too open… in your view… in expressing your view?

Itee: Yes, I think… some thought it quite interesting to have a thought like that, and then one or two just didn't really know how to discuss some things in that way. They thought it quite strange and they didn't know how to… talk about such things so openly... and… But I think they had been told, or they knew that's how... perhaps... an English girl would more likely to say things like that. So I mean, obviously they were university students, they wouldn't… you know, they knew we had slightly different id… ways of looking at authority… in England to in China. So I don't think they were completely surprised, um… they were expected, they knew that. There were students of politics, or sociology…

Itr: Do you find that very interesting?

Itee: Yeah, especially I had some conversations talking about Tibet with a friend, because I travel there that summer, and we had very different ideas of… that sort of thing.

Itr: Yes. Let's move to another question. Also you believed that the two cultures are not the same in terms of… attitudes and behaviours toward out-group, um… can you be more specific about it? Out-group like in, you know, … like if you are a Chinese, they treat Chinese differently from Westerners, um… if you are sort of... let's say, your group of friends, you work for this company, they are more close to each other, and they have different attitude towards outsider. (Itee: Yeah, that's true) Do you believe that… you believe that in… Westerners you have somehow different attitude and behaviour?

Itee: I think a lot of the times in China it's just perhaps because there… Westerners haven't been going there for so long, whilst here in England we are much… especially when you come from London, you are far more used to everybody coming from somewhere different, with a lot of different ethnic background. Whereas… I think, still in China, there is… far less… far fewer

foreigners who mixed a lot with the Chinese, because obviously you have people like embassy staff, but they tend to stay together. So I think that just make them more wary… at first, especially when you go to the countryside and they haven't… haven't got to know so many, well, if any sort of Westerners before, um… I don't know.

Itr: Um… you… you mean in behaviour are they trying to…

Itee: Towards foreigners, towards… or perhaps towards black people, because we used to seeing far more African Americans or African or… while a lot of my Chinese friends were far less used to… to seeing so many people, so their attitude was different. It was more like they were slightly stranger, rather than they were someone they saw everyday or… saw the people like that down the streets. It was…

Itr: They… they feel uncomfortable…?

Itee: Um… maybe, yeah, maybe a little actually, perhaps… or… more just it wasn't normal, it wasn't usual… cos some of my… a lot of my Chinese friends said: Oh, this is the first time I had… I've known a Western person, or… an English girl, to be friends with them by name, whist in England most people have been to school with a Chinese person or a French person… you know, African person. … In that sense, they'd be more wary, maybe…

Itr: And more specifically, is there any… how… how their behaviour changes… like towards to foreigners and towards their own friends… any very obvious… behaviour changes… in that respect?

Itee: I think as soon as they… all the Chinese people I met, as soon as they… made the differentiation, you stop being a foreigner and became their friend, and they completely forgot that… you were a foreigner. Um… and I think… with most of the Chinese friends, it was like that all the time. At first, it was… they maybe felt a bit: Oh I was English, and I must be very rich or… very, you know, luck to live in England or something or… not lucky to... But then, they stopped thinking me like that, just thought me as a… another friend. Yeah…

Itr: Yes, yes. Um… it's good to be… you know, to be friends and share everything. Um… right, another one – that is: Imagine that you were given a task to negotiate a deal in China, and your boss knew nothing about China. You expected… He or she expected the task to be completed speedily with all the conditions met, but he might not appreciate any potential obstacles created by cultural differences. In order to get succ… to get necessary support and not to be blamed for incompetence, what would you like your boss to be aware of?

Itee: Um… I'll tell him things takes longer in China. There's more bureaucracy, things like getting visa changed, or organizing…a meeting, these things take… everything has to be checked by someone. And… very few people want to take responsibility… for making a decision, or tell you a fact, if you go for a visa office, they don't want to be the one who says you must do it like this, because then they don't want to get into trouble. It was very much… everyone had to ask someone else, and they would then go and ask somebody else, no one wanted to… So, in that sense, I would say, you know, things would take much longer… things… um…

Itr: Anything else?

Itee: Um… what was the second part?

Itr: Just that… so you… you were prepare you boss, as it were, for your work. Because he might blame you for something, because he wanted the negotiation to be done not only quickly, but with all the conditions met?

Itee: Right. Um… it was certainly the point of taking longer. And also… um… I should think it depended on what the job was there for them… you know, you… I wouldn't say the Chinese were any more difficult to… perhaps… you'd have to… the culture, I'd say, the business culture were so different, that I had to say to the boss: well, you know, sometimes the condition… might not all be met. Certainly maybe not immediately, there had to be some negotiations…. in order maybe to avoid any misunderstanding, or annoy the other side or something. Whilst, um… just take… be more careful about… presenting things, points or… ideas or… conditions or something.

Itr: Yes. It is important how… the way you know how to present them, but when you said, try to avoid anything annoying… in views of the other side. What kind of things could be potentially annoying?

Itee: Um… I don't know so much about business practice… um I can't think of anything immediately, but… the way used to conduct business and this sort of thing… um… it would be far easier to offend a Chinese, or even say a Japanese businessman, I would imagine, than a French one. Because… I was doing business with a vineyard for much similar… whilst, um… not wanting to appear, perhaps things take longer in Chinese way, because you don't want to appear to be too abrupt, or too demanding. You have to be more subtle about how you phrase… the quest, so as not to make the other side feel as if you… were… superior or trying to be… superior. Whereas in the West, it is much more head to head, much more… sort of… we demand this, we want this. Maybe doing business with… a Chinese company you have to be… take a soft-soft, more soft approach.

Itr: Right. And on the other side, when you were working in China, do you feel any… of their ways of dealing with things, or approach annoying in any way?

Itee: Um… I wasn't, because I wasn't really doing business as such…

Itr: General approach to things…?

Itee: Um… I found that their not wanting to take responsibility for giving a direct answer quite annoying. Um… lots of problems going to visa office, you say I'd like to, you've been told perhaps by the department… to say, to ask for this particular visa, so you would go, and they gave you that visa, and you go back a week later, and someone else would say: oh, you didn't need that visa. This is a better one for someone in your situation, to have this… But they… the person who last week didn't tell you, because you didn't ask for it, therefore they weren't just going to tell you. Does that make sense? They won't going to tell you anyway, you have to actually ask for it. Or sometimes… you want an answer to… when can I get my visa. Then they would say: I don't know, I don't know. I'll have to go and ask someone, and they had to go to ask someone.

Itr: Yeah, I see. Yes, very slow and… Um… and… after, you know, you noticed that *guanxi* plays a big role… in social relationship, right? Do you think it could in any way affect the way in which an outsider or foreigner works with Chinese people or work in China?

Itee: I think maybe if they didn't realize the importance of *guanxi*, the importance of doing favoritism, and knowing someone, they maybe have hard time… cos they wouldn't know that they could ask for favors, but they also wouldn't know to give favors, to be more accommodating to the people's requests. Um… that might affect on how to do business.

Itr: And in your point of view, why people… um you know, so emphasized on *guanxi*… in… Any attempt to…

Itee: I assume… I don't know, I assume it is because… um in China's… well… resent history, as well as long histories, because a lot of things were done through who you knew, rather

than… your qualifications, or your… there are so many people were trying to replaces, or trying for… different… places in universities or wanting special conditions or something. You have to know someone, so you have to do favors for someone, who is perhaps an official. And so this is just carry on a bit more sort of… I assume.

Itr: Yeah, HEN YOU YI SI (very interesting). And do you feel comfortable if you are to work there and have to build up… *guanxi*. Do you feel comfortable about it?

Itee: Yeah, because I've got used to it. Because… in may job with the magazine it was very much sort of going to hotels and restaurants, and… and social places like that. And music bans, music things, and you got used to being (not audible) the *guanxi*, because I was to write an article, saying that the food was very good, and maybe if I wanted come back with a friend next week, they would give me a free meal… this sort of things. So, I got very used to it… and… and in the… in the magazine industry… um working that way, it was all the case (not audible). You know, we were all friends... we would all help each other, have a meal or write an article. But I… I can imagine it would be harder if you wanted to do concrete business, more… buying and selling this sort of things… rather than just…

Itr: Yes, yes. Um… after your stay in China, and… you… after your working experience, what would you think… will be useful if, you know, if anything should be covered in the Business language course? Of course, you are not going to… this year to take this course, but any suggestions?

Itee: Um… things that would be useful to learn?

Itr: Yes, about preparing… um anybody to work abroad, to work in China.

Itee: Obviously… the importance of *guanxi* in Chinese business practice. Um… but also…well, I can't… I can't think of anything else.

Itr: Well, don't worry, don't worry about it. I just ask, you know, if you got anything, we can just implemented… … if you got any thing… we can… just incorporate… Yes, but is there anything that you feel difficult to get used to… in terms of socializing with Chinese people?

Itee: Um… in terms of socializing with people from my work, it is OK, because… they were quite Westernized, they were very… the young girls I worked with were very into Western fashion, and they would go out to have a cup of… beer in the bar in the evening… But certainly the friends I made in the university… um the girls didn't drink beer, even just if we sat outside, just had one beer… they'd feel… that was bit…unusual. We would have to do something constructive, we would have to be learning or practicing or… We never really just sat and just talked about boyfriends. The girls were always sort of… talking something related to study or… interesting concepts. Um… and obviously most of my friends in university had a lot less money than I did, even though I am only a student. But because I was in China, what to me it wasn't a lot of money in England it is obviously a lot of money in China. And… and in that case it was hard, because I… we can… always… we can go and get a cup of coffee or do… what I did. Um… and I talked to them... as what they normally do. And normally… they would normally sit in their rooms and drink tea and chat, which is fine, but… it meant I couldn't get to know them the same way I would know my Western friends by going and doing something together.

Itr: Yeah, they had different… living conditions, so you can't communicate in the same way. Yes, and apart from that, do you feel some of their behaviour is… for you…could be, you know, their way of thinking, and way of approaching things, their… make it… for you to feel difficult to… to, you know, to talk to them, or…

Itee: Um… no, I never… I never found it difficult to talk to my Chinese friends, because I was like… I had three Chinese friends, two girls and a boy, I got on very well with all of them. We

used to talk about… they asked me about England, and I could ask them about… anything. But I found the girls, they were both my… at the exactly the same age as me, 22, but they were quite… had very different experiences as young girls in China to what I had… in England. All that I had is that of a young woman in England. Um… so that was quite different, but… um… there was never any difficulties talking to them.

Itr: Right, so you can talk any topics?

Itee: Yeah, and I mean I think it's always understood… that my views were slightly different. I always knew that… they came from China and I came from England, so… they knew that we were always going to have different ideas about things. But that was never a problem. It was just a part of… it was just more interesting… rather than… being a problem.

Itr: Yeah. If some… if they don't agree with your view, is… is there any… occasion that they don't agree with your view and argue with you?

Itee: Um… they didn't… really argue as much, they weren't very… confrontational, there was more sort of OK, change the subject a bit more so you would be… um… Sometimes maybe I said: Oh well, we think it is like this in the West, or we have this opinion on... or I have this opinion, which is normal in the West of, say… the question of Taiwan or something. And they would say: well, no, but this is how it is. And you'd say well, don't you think… and they would go, no, this is how it is. And you might say but don't you think it maybe… No, no, this is the way it is. So sometimes it was a bit… in that sense. But I think they just thought or knew that I had different views, it wasn't that … they had a problem… with me having different views. They just knew about that westerners have different views.

Itr: Yes. That's interesting. It always comes back to the point. Yes… um… and probably we should be… another point… another two points to make. One is that have you ever tried to find out an answer to why privacy is not… very highly valued, as it were, in Chinese culture?

Itee: I think… might not… I mean it is a case of space, it is just not so much… although China is huge, all the people are concentrated in small areas. Obviously, space is money. And there are a lot of poor… much poorer people in China, and a whole family is living in a small house, so you grow up being far more used to be surrounded by people. It is much more... home is much more family oriented. Whist we were used to living with… a big house, everybody has their own bedroom… Um because there are fewer people to be among the space, so we're used to always having our own, even it is just a very small bedroom… you have your own space. Whereas the Chinese friends I had… you know, sometimes they shared a room with the cousin… or they all had a main room. And at the university, obviously they would share... for five or six to a room, because it is not financially possible… for people to have… just two people in a room. Um… they were just much more used to always knowing what the other people were doing, they didn't expect to have their own room… They were… because like… some of my friends, they weren't used to having their own personal space, so they didn't expect you to… they wouldn't think that, maybe… you sort of like that.

Itr: Yeah. So they… do they often ask you some questions you think very private?

Itee: Um… not so much. I suppose they didn't do first, but then they might ask me more personal questions, but because we were good friends, it wasn't out of place. Maybe about boyfriends or… just… um drinking or anything what we did… um… they tended to be more direct, whilst we might be a bit more subtle about asking a question… or maybe trying work out whether it is appropriate. Quite often I had one friend, if she wanted to know something and she just asked me, but I never felt that was… I never felt that was… sort of too personal.

Itr: Right. So it is fine. And… last question is probably… it is not very… specific question, it is probably not very explicit. In what way do you think Chinese culture is very different from yours?

Itee: Well, obviously in lots of ways it is quite different. I think… it is definitely more family-oriented... um… it is still much more of a more traditional society than that in England… and in that sense. And… there is more respect for the hierarchy and for the elder… even that you can see that's changing in younger people, and they have different maybe idea and values. But even so most people still have very… a far more respect for a hierarchical… society than in England. And… people don't seem to question as much, or for younger people, there is more acceptance… and less… just less.

Itr: Yes. You said they were more respect to hierarchical orders and to elders… people, can you give a more specific example? Can you think of any example… of that?

Itee: Um… I would say to teachers, it is… although the way my… I never saw a Chinese student with Chinese teachers, but the way my friends spoke about their teachers… very respectful, because they are much learnt, they are very… Quite different nowadays when people don't to go to lessons or don't do their homework, or… challenge what the… you know, the teacher may say something, and they would say something like: Oh, I don't know, maybe it's different. I got the impression that my Chinese friends would never have… um done that. (Itr: so they wouldn't challenge their teacher?) No. Always, the teacher was always right, and they would always respect what the teacher… said.

Itr: Yes. I think you are quite right there. There is more respect to authority, as you said earlier, probably respect for elders? (Itee: Yes, parents… and…) … So you don't feel… anything… too much different… very different so that you just feel… oh… uncomfortable about?

Itee: Um… Chinese people don't… it is probably…perhaps more to do with the staring… added to the privacy thing. But I found… um people stared in the streets… not just me because I'm a girl of white or whatever, but maybe there is… someone who is deformed somewhere and begging, they would just stared, walk past and they might stare. Whist in England people were… much, whether it is better or worse, but much sort of Oh, I don't want to upset… I won't stare or… they are less likely… I found myself now back in England, I quite often sit and just stare at people and friends go: Stop it, that's rude. And so I suppose that's partly the invasion of privacy. I had a friend came to stay with me in China, and she is very tall and big. I mean, very tall just for Eng… in England. But obvious to… and the two of us as we walked together in China, we both had a sort of slight light blond hair, and everybody would look at us. And she found it… I was used to it by then I'd been there for few months. She found it so strange and got quite sort of… "Well, what they are doing made me quite upset"… because everybody just found very normal to stare. And in that sense, it is lack of privacy.

Itr: Right… Anything else you can come up with about this? (Itee: No, I can't… not immediately anyway.) Yes, I think sometimes when being asked questions that you are not prepared, but it … with a more specific context … it is dif... But thank you very much. If I still find anything needs clarifying, can I…?

Itee: Yes, of course. I didn't answer very well, because…

Itr: Good. It's very good.

Appendix V – A List of Business Chinese Language Learning Books

Guan, D. and Yu, X. (2000). *A Practical Business Chinese Reader* (商务汉语读本). Beijing: Beijing University Press.

Howard, J. and Chang, T. (2005). *Business Chinese* (商业汉语). Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.

Huang, W. (1994). *Business Chinese*: *Intermediate* (中级经贸汉语). Beijing: Sinolingua Press.

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