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Engaging with learning within the UK
HE context: A narrative inquiry of
international student experience

Gillian Byrne

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Education

July 2017

Abstract

Taking a narrative inquiry approach and using poetic forms of representation, this thesis details the journey of a group of international and UK Higher Education students as they developed the skills necessary to become independent learners and engage in a new educational context. In contrast to many studies which take international students as their focus, this study does not isolate one group and thus avoids a deficit approach to an understanding of the international student experience.

The narrative inquiry methodology used combines elements of life story, life history, ethnography and autobiography; it is emergent, responsive, blurring genres, boundaries and refusing dichotomous classifications. Using Savin-Baden's (2004) combined analysis and interpretation approach, stories were created. These were collated into themes which identified connections across the stories, and to the issues identified as the focus of the study. These stories became the basis for a process of poetic transcription/analysis/interpretation where data, reflective notes, field notes and literature were integrated into stanzas which combined the voices of the participants', the researcher and those of the literature (Byrne, 2015).

The students' narratives revealed an initially differentiated direct entrant experience. These students shared with their continuing peers a novice status in the subject but this was coupled with a novice status in the learning environment. The students had a practical conceptualisation of critical thinking, in that they articulated their understanding of this concept in terms of reading, research, writing and the construction of citation based arguments within their assignment. There was a move from reliance on the tutor as the bestower of knowledge to a collaborative construction of knowledge. The second year of study was characterised by a changing social dynamic that resulted from the joining of the direct entrant students. Thus the second year was about working out who to work with in order to achieve the best outcome. There was interaction between international and UK students. Skills were adapted, refined and shared in multiple communities of practice within a landscape of learning. The students' learning experience was transformative in terms of their skills development.

Poetry makes the representation of data an individual process of making meaning but also transcends the personal, evoking the experience of the participants, making the researcher's influence explicit and acknowledging the many co-collaborators in its production including the reader. The poems evoke the experiences of a peer-supportive and diverse group of students, illuminating the collaborative nature of their skills development as they share not just subject knowledge but also methods for learning and assessment. Through a focus on a combination of international, UK, second year and direct entrant students, insights are provided into the ways in which this particular diverse group of students negotiated cultural and language differences to develop supportive, inter-cultural communities of practice.

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The doctoral thesis can be a lonely road and there are peaks and troughs along the way. I would like to thank colleagues who every now and then asked me how things were going. That offer of interest and support made a real difference, especially during those times when I doubted myself or just lost the momentum.

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Engaging with learning within the UK HE context: A narrative inquiry of international student experience

Journey to University

How did you get here?

From school to college to uni

We walked the well-worn path.

From far away in China, we came two by two.

I dropped out

Hopping between call centres,

Called me back to uni.

An International Foundation,

An Accounts Technician Course.

There were many ways.

Becoming friends in China, we came together.

Sharing a language friendships travel,

But remain fixed,

A comfort against the strange.

Difficulties located in difference mean

Words remain unspoken,

Cross-cultural contact avoided

A void too great.

I stayed close to home.

I reached far from home.

To make the language my own,

Hoping for friendships across cultures,

To watch horizons melt away difference

New knowledge a bright, light

Illuminating a landscape of paths

Before me.

Introduction

My position in relation to the research: a personal perspective

There are moments in my past career that I can point to as being influential in the forming of my research interests. When I first worked with international students they came to the course on which I was teaching as asylum seekers and often via unspeakable horrors. I remember one young woman brave and determined having narrowly escaped violence unimaginable to most of us. I also can remember clearly the face of a young man both physically and emotionally scarred who would not or could not speak for the first few months of the course. When his voice did come it was in a fragile whisper. In a world where the silencing of others is often an act of control or brutality this silence was chosen in response to an act that was literally unspeakable. This man's story has poignancy for all of us who seek to tell the stories of others. These are two of many and I have no idea what has happened to them since and can only hope that my part in their lives was positive.

When I joined the university at which I now work, and in which I conducted this research, international student numbers were relatively low as compared to the present picture. I was firstly involved in teaching Post Graduate International Business Management students; all European Union (EU) and mostly French. Their experiences and needs were entirely different from the students I had taught before. For the most part they were confident students, at least confident that the strategies that had served them well in the past would do as well in the United Kingdom (UK). Understandably many were little interested in hearing that perhaps they may have to do some things differently. The standard essay form they had been taught throughout school was appropriate in some contexts but not in others. For some this was a challenge to their writing strategies. It was and still is the case that educational practices differ between contexts (Byrne and Harvey, 2015). But it is also the case that part of the experience of coming to the UK is to learn new things and new ways; to expand horizons (Byrne and Harvey, 2015). International students studying in the UK engage in courses that lead to the award of British qualifications standardised through processes, policies and mechanisms. The presence of international students on UK campuses presents an opportunity for the exchange of ideas. What is problematic is if that exchange is always a one way street and we do not attempt to learn from our visitors also (Cortazzi and Jin, 1997; Ryan and Louie, 2007; Leask and Carroll, 2011). However, changes

that would influence UK academic practice demand significant institutional engagement and commitment.

Now I teach a wide range of international students from many countries and in retrospect the challenges I faced with that one cohort, who came from an educational culture relatively similar to that of the average UK student, were as nothing in comparison. Our international students have increased in both number and diversity and the teaching environment is dynamic bringing new challenges with each academic year. Their previous educational experiences may well be very different to that of UK Higher Education (HE) and in particular they may find the range of assessment strategies they face here challenging (Byrne and Harvey, 2015). I have spoken to students who find the differences challenging but enjoyable; they see how they have developed new skills and confidence. I have also spoken to students who are angry; they did not expect it to be so different and they are frustrated. They are also disheartened as they see themselves go from high achievers in their own country to lower achievers in a new environment where the language is different and the assessment practices are unfamiliar and not always explicit.

My working role now involves a great deal of contact with international students. As a learning developer, I support their studies in many ways including classroom teaching and one-to-one tutorial. Perhaps the nature of this second role means that I see more of the challenges international students face than the successes; maybe this gives me a skewed view of what it is to come to a foreign place and attempt to succeed in a different educational context. Of course there are many successes but such students do not as frequently seek my help. This is true of the UK cohort too. Statistics here at my university, and in many others, tell us that although a great many of our international students complete they are less likely to achieve degrees in the higher classifications than their UK counterparts (HESA, 2016). The influence that educationalists have in the classroom and through assessment and feedback is only part of the educational experience of the student. I was interested in understanding more about how students engage with and develop their own strategies for learning. This brought me to a study which aimed to understand how students engage with their learning in the space which we as educationalists do not control and only partially influence; how do students use their own study time, how do they make the transition and transformation as learners within that space to become independent

learners able to effectively use that space and time? It seemed to me that to come to a better understanding of the experience of international students I needed to explore this space and process. It also seemed to me that these questions were as pertinent to UK students as they are to international students; both cohorts were in transition from one educational experience to another. Further to this, the international and UK students were on this journey together and so one group could not be seen in isolation from the other; even if the interaction between groups was minimal they were still each a part of the educational environment of the other. Understanding this process a little better would, I hoped, inform those of us involved in supporting the learning of international and UK students.

Contribution to Knowledge

The focus of this study was the skills development of direct entrant international students as they negotiate their learning in a new educational context. That context includes their UK peers and so I aimed to understand the international student experience of their skills development in comparison to and alongside their UK peers.

The students' narratives revealed an initially differentiated direct entrant experience. Although these international students shared with their continuing peers a novice status in the subject, this was coupled with a novice status in the learning environment.

The students had a practical conceptualisation of critical thinking, in that they articulated their understanding of this concept in terms of reading, research, writing and the construction of citation based arguments within their assignment. There was a move from reliance on the tutor as the bestower of knowledge to a collaborative construction of knowledge.

The second year of study was characterised by a changing social dynamic that resulted from the joining of the direct entrant students. Thus the second year was about working out who to work with in order to achieve the best outcome. There was interaction between international and UK students. Skills were adapted, refined and shared in multiple communities of practice within a landscape of learning. The students' learning experience was transformative in terms of their skills development.

In addition to the findings detailed above I make a further contribution in this thesis in the form of a methodological approach to educational research that sees empathetic communication in a supportive environment as fundamentally important. It offers a genuinely student-driven approach to knowledge creation by providing counter-narratives to the dominant position and a richer understanding of their lived experience. This has the potential to influence internationalisation strategies where the student experience sits at the heart of curriculum, assessment and support developments.

This methodology is based on a narrative understanding of experience where people, participants and researchers, are central (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The narrative approach is an overarching principle applied to all aspects of the research process (Conle, 2000). Through an exploration of narrative methods of analysis and representation, I developed a simultaneous transcription/analysis/interpretation process (Byrne, 2015). Through this process I sought to tell a more expansive story by integrating the data with my experience and voices from the wider literature. In doing so I aimed to give the participants' voices equality in the process of knowledge making. I combined the data, my reflective notes, field notes and the literature in poetic form. Poetic representation transcends the individual interpretation of the researcher by evoking the experience of the participants, encompassing the many co-collaborators in its production including that of the reader. Thus poetry makes space for multiple voices, layers of stories and multiple interpretations in a non-hierarchical manner.

I used this methodology in the context of the internationalisation of UK Higher Education (HE), but more specifically to enable an understanding of the experiences of students. Significantly, I used the approach to explore the experiences of international and UK students together as a dynamic group; a group not significantly addressed in combination in the literature. The participants were second year and direct entrant students. The application of such a methodology to the understanding of the experiences of this particular mix of students adds a unique perspective to the larger understanding of the international student experience.

The reality of the students' experiences is a variety of voices, literally languages, just as I negotiated multiple voices in the journey to this research process, resulting in a

methodology with the capacity to represent the many layers, folds and voices in the story of experience.

Philosophical Position

In their development of a narrative inquiry methodology Clandinin and Connelly (2000) have taken as their philosophical basis Dewey's conception of experience. For Dewey experience is 'a changing stream that is characterised by continuous interaction of human thought with our personal, social, and material environment' (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007, p. 39). Thus this is a 'pragmatic ontology' based on transaction, which, Clandinin and Rosiek (2007, p.39) argue, has epistemological implications for narrative inquiry as a methodology based on these principles; the narratives arising out of a narrative inquiry methodology are not a 'faithful representation of a reality independent of the knower' but enable the participants and others to see the world anew. Our understanding is created through experience and that experience is continuous, experiences lead onto other experiences and our narratives arise out of that continuous stream and return to it (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007). This ontological position rejects the transcendental conception of reality:

'In other words, what you see (and hear, feel, think, love, taste, despise, fear, etc) is what you get. That is all we ultimately have in which to ground our understanding. And that is all we need' (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007, p. 41).

So Dewey's view of experience means that inquiry does not result in 'the identification of an unchanging transcendent reality' (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007, p. 41). But rather it 'is an act within a stream of experience that generates new relations that then become a part of future experience' (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007, p. 41). Thus the ontological position of narrative inquiry is that 'experiences are continuously interactive, resulting in changes in both people, ... the contexts in which they interact' (Caine, Estefan and Clandinin, 2013, p. 576) **and the constant refinement of meaning**. This means 'attending to the relational in-between spaces' and results in 'possibilities ... to discover new ways of knowing and understanding, and also for profound change' (Caine, Estefan and Clandinin, 2013, p.580).

Just as experience is continuous and interactional so 'the production of research texts follows the art of engagement in a storied research relationship that is never final, and could always be otherwise' (Caine, Estefan and Clandinin, 2013, p.582). Thus the narratives

produced by research are living texts and their aim is 'to help us to learn and form connections with others' (Caine, Estefan and Clandinin, 2013, p.583) and so 'for narrative inquirers a transcript alone simply will not do' (Caine, Estefan and Clandinin, 2013, p.579). 'A relational and transactional ontology precedes narrative inquiry research, because stories are about what happens to and between people' (Caine, Estefan and Clandinin, 2013, p.583).

It is this philosophical position which underpins the narrative inquiry approach I have taken in this thesis and is an act of 'thinking narratively' throughout all stages of the research process (Xu and Connelly, 2010, p.355).

Narrative Inquiry is a varied methodological approach and shares boundaries with other positions, which inevitably creates tension. In taking a non-traditional approach to both the structure of this thesis and the representation of data I have drawn on ideas created by 'post-structuralist critiques ... of scientism', which have resulted in the idea that there may be **'other ways of knowing than the traditional approaches and structures of writing generally associated with positivist approaches'** (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007, p. 52).

However, it is important to be aware of the important departure narrative inquiry, as a methodological approach, takes from the philosophical position of post-structuralism.

Narrative inquiry is influenced by post-structuralism to the extent that it shares the position that 'some knowledge [is] narrative in form' (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007, p. 55).

However, the post-structuralist researcher interprets narratives as 'preexisting social discourses' and not individual lived experiences and therefore 'immediate sources of knowledge and insight' as the narrative inquirer does (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007, p. 55).

Thus, in this thesis although influenced by a post-structuralist embrace of alternative ways of knowing and a consequent deconstruction of the traditional thesis form, data analysis and representation, I take the same departure from post-structuralism as Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) maintaining a pragmatic ontology which begins with experience and returns to experience for its validation. That is not to say that I have ignored social and cultural influences but rather these are 'resources to be used in the pursuit of always tentative and partial ameliorations of experience' (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007, p. 55).

A final caveat to Clandinin and Rosiek's (2007, p.58) epistemological and ontological distinctions is that in reality researchers very often find themselves operating in the 'borderlands'. '[P]hilosophical exactness is often a luxury. The actual business of interpreting human experience is messier' (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007, p. 58).

So how to navigate the messiness of life? Xu and Connelly (2010, p.351) offer a practical approach suggesting that narrative inquiry is 'mostly unconcerned with abstract boundaries'. Rather narrative inquirers in a practice-based, educational, research context are 'concern[ed] with their ongoing professional and public lives, trying to make the best of things and trying to improve things' (Xu and Connelly, 2010, p.351). Theory is 'chosen and used after-the-fact and as appropriate to providing an interpretative frame for what emerge[s]' in the study (Xu and Connelly, 2010, p.353). This approach is compatible with an emergent methodology that responds to the field; following this approach the literature was, for me, a lens through which to view the stories I had gathered offering multiple perspectives from which to view the students' experiences. Again this is entirely congruent with a philosophical position which views experiences as constantly changing and sees understanding as emerging out of experience. Xu and Connelly (2010) call the research field the 'lifespace' alluding to the complexity of its nature. For them an interpretation and subsequent understanding of what happens in the lifespace cannot be 'reduced to single theory applications' (Xu and Connelly, 2010, p. 362). Thus I took as a guiding principle their argument that '[n]egotiating a life space is something like negotiating life itself' (Xu and Connelly, 2010, p. 366).

Borderlands/in-between spaces could be seen as unifying metaphors for this thesis in terms of the student experience it evokes, the process of learning it explores, the process of conducting the study for me and the subsequent writing process. The students I followed in this study moved through years of study and/or from home country to the UK. These were temporal and physical, geographical moves but not clearly demarked moves with absolute borders. These are moves on a continuum of experience and there may be a time lag between these stages emotionally and academically in terms of readiness.

The ideas I have drawn on to inform my research share a focus on in-between spaces. Magolda (1992) talks about moves through the first, second and third years of

undergraduate study, through related stages of knowing and a consequent changing relationship to knowledge. Mezirow's (2000) model of transformative learning involves movement through ten stages of development. In both cases these moves imply borderlands or in-between spaces. Also, Wenger et. al. (2015) discuss landscapes of learning and the spaces in-between.

Guttorm (2012) talks about writing from a nomadic place. Stronarch and MacLure (1997) and Bill Ayres (Hatch and Wisniewski, 1995) about baffling boundaries. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007, p.59) discuss the borderlands between ideologies arguing that '[n]arrative inquirers frequently find themselves crossing cultural discourses, ideologies, and institutional boundaries'.

There is a sense in which all of this thesis, its subject and its process, is about the in-between places and movement across boundaries and borders. Never staying in one place or being firmly in one place but always in the process of going somewhere else.

Outline

Following on from the previous statement, which outlined my position as a researcher, this thesis continues with background context, a rationale, aims and research questions. There follows my account of finding a methodology that I felt congruous to the purposes of my research and with which I felt comfortable. A discussion of this methodology forms the basis of a recently published paper (Byrne, 2015) and sections from this publication are reproduced in this thesis. Included in the methodology section of this thesis is an account of how I came to develop a means of representation I felt provided space for multiple interpretations, included the participants' voices in a non-hierarchical manner, and made explicit my influence on the research process and the final representation. There are multiple voices presented here and multiple ways of reading them. I have my reading, you will have yours. In this thesis I have taken the opportunity to explore some ideas about representation and what they might mean for the research thesis structure. I do not have the space to include all the data collected so have made editorial choices as all research writers must. Sparkes (1995) suggests that language choices influence the readers' understandings and perceptions of the subjects. As a writer the researcher can signpost to the reader intent and perspective which can lead to a questioning of the text (Coulter and

Smith, 2009). Smith (2009) argues that this in fact leads to a desired reading of the text. Narratives he (Smith, 2009) argues are not polyphonic and usually convey one argument. But in using the form of poetry I have tried to explore ways in which I hope to achieve a more fluid interplay between, rather than rigid and hierarchical positioning of, competing voices. The data and discussion chapters therefore, take the form of poetry written in response to the data, literature, my reflections and field notes. I hope that my reading is not dominant; it follows the data chapter and takes the form of a commentary. Here I review the literature I have used to provide lenses through which to view the participants' experiences. The reason for not placing the literature review in a prominent, early position in the thesis is that I am seeking to avoid the literature taking a dominant position and therefore possibly drowning out the participants' voices. There follows a section where I make contextual connections to my own professional practice by way of concluding remarks. The limitations of my study are then considered. I end the thesis with a post-script (appendices), which tells the individual stories of the participants.

The internationalisation of Higher Education

In recent years UK HE has experienced both an increase in and diversification of international student recruitment. The aim of my research therefore is to understand both international and UK students' engagement with their learning within the increasingly diverse UK Higher Education Institution (HEI) campus environment. One view of the internationalisation of HE is that it is economically driven (Tian and Lowe, 2009; Wadhwa and Jha, 2014), resulting in a fundamental shift whereby HEIs position themselves as service providers (Pereda, Airey and Bennett, 2007). The internationalisation of HE undoubtedly makes a major contribution to the revenues of universities, but also has a significant role to play in the development of skilled professionals able to function in an international workplace, whilst also contributing to a resulting raising of standards when national HEIs begin to compete with international HEIs (Wadhwa and Jha, 2014).

Further to this, there is an important social rationale, as the internationalisation of HE stimulates 'intercultural exchange and understanding' (Wadhwa and Jha, 2014, p.101). Haigh (2014, pp. 8-16) provides a much wider rationale for the internationalisation of HE which includes: 'economic survival'; 'world-class' status; developing students' 'intercultural and cross-cultural competencies' and sense of self as a 'global citizen'.

Internationalisation is a multi-layered process that arises from drivers that concern survival and adaptation to a globalising world, through changing patterns of competitive pressure, changing regulatory environments, changing educational priorities and opportunities, to changing personal responsibilities in a fragile world. It is part of a whole university process that shifts perspectives from the local to the global (Haigh, 2014, p. 21).

However, Wadhwa and Jha (2014) argue that even within the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) guidelines these economic, academic, social and cultural exchanges are taking place on far from equal terms with the richest countries dominating the process. 'In 2012, more than 4.4 million students were enrolled in tertiary education outside their country of citizenship' (OECD, 2014, p. 342). 82% were enrolled in G20 countries and 75% in OECD countries, whilst 53% came from Asia (OECD, 2014). OECD (2014) suggests that such student mobility can help countries use financial resources more effectively by increasing student numbers without the expense of investing in growth of their own provision. Wadhwa and Jha (2014, p.113) interrogate this idea further suggesting that '[d]espite a large public spending on higher education in almost all South Asian countries, financial resources to meet the growing demand for higher education are far from adequate' (Wadhwa and Jha, 2014, p.113). To take India as an example the 'deregulation and privatization' of higher education has led to the existence of HEIs of varying quality (Wadhwa and Jha, 2014, p.109).

There are obvious economic advantages to those countries receiving students and such enrolments are often encouraged as 'part of a broader strategy to recruit highly skilled immigrants' (OECD, 2014, p. 343). Knight (2013, p.84, p.85), however, cautions that although there are many benefits to be gained from internationalisation there are also 'potential risks and unintended consequences' many of which 'seem to be associated with the cross-border aspects and activities' of internationalisation. One such risk and consequence is the competition between developed countries for highly skilled and educated workers to the detriment of developing countries (Knight, 2013; Wadhwa and Jha, 2014).

Another issue is the potential homogenisation of cultures. There are two opposing arguments, the first being that internationalisation encourages intercultural awareness and thus values diversity, the second that western education is an acculturation process that erodes diversity (Knight, 2013). 'Franchise programmes' and 'branch campuses' in particular are 'criticised as agents of homogenisation' (Knight, 2013, p.88). The issues are complex as 'quality assurance' mechanisms demand that such programmes be 'equivalent' to those delivered 'at the home campus', this often results in the delivery of programmes where there has been little 'adaptation to suit the local context' (Knight, 2013, p.88), what Montgomery (2014, p.198) terms as 'one-way traffic'.

Language and, in particular the status of English as the lingua franca, impacts the choice of student destination (OECD, 2014). Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, the UK and the United States (US) accounted for '41%' of the increase in 'foreign' enrolments 'between 2000 and 2012' (OECD, 2014, p. 346). '[I]n 2012, around one in four foreign students came from a country with the same official or widely spoken language as the country of destination' (OECD,2014, p.346). It would seem that for many students choosing to study outside of their home country destination choice is impacted by 'language and cultural considerations, geographical proximity and similarity of education systems' (OECD, 2014, p.351).

The aims of the Internationalisation of UK Higher Education

During the Labour government's administration in the UK two initiatives by the then Prime Minister (PMI 1 and PMI 2, funding from 2008-2011) explicitly set out to grow international student recruitment in the UK. This resulted not only in a dramatic increase in numbers of international students on British campuses but a diversification of the countries represented (Trahar, 2011). It also stimulated much debate about what international recruitment and the subsequent potential for UK HEIs means to students and to universities (Trahar, 2011; Montgomery, 2010; Hyland, Trahar, Anderson and Dickens, 2008). The literature around this topic has formed into discrete fields with recruitment and the changing positioning of universities as service providers in a competitive market being one such focus (Pereda et al., 2007). Tian and Lowe (2009, p.659) argue that the UK HE internationalisation agenda should rather focus on developing 'intercultural' 'engagement' and 'understanding'. They see this as located within the wider theoretical context of globalisation and internationalisation

whereby universities mirror what is happening worldwide economically, socially and politically (Tian and Lowe, 2009). Here they see globalisation as a western economic agenda resulting in cultural hegemony and an ineffective internationalisation response (Tian and Lowe, 2009). Such a response they (Tian and Lowe, 2009, p.661) argue should 'be based on the acceptance and celebration of differences in cultural identities and seek to improve intercultural understanding rather than cultural dominance and assimilation based on asymmetrical power relationships'. Rather than expecting the internationalisation of a university to happen as a result of recruitment, Tian and Lowe (2009) argue that institutions need to actively respond to the dynamic that large numbers of international students bring to their educational environment. This would be a 'transformative internationalisation' which would and 'should affect the nature of the educational experiences of all in the university' (Tian and Lowe, 2009, p.662).

Similarly, Montgomery (2010) argues that it is wrong to view internationalisation only from the narrow perspective of recruitment. She suggests that although in response to the PMIs HEIs 'have developed effective recruitment policies and support systems' they have not similarly internationalised 'teaching, support and research cultures. Thus the experience of some students, both international and home, may remain untouched by the potential benefits of internationalization' (Montgomery, 2010, p.5). As far back as 1999 the OECD defined internationalisation as 'the integration of an international/intercultural dimension into all of the activities of a university, including the teaching, research and service functions' (OECD, 1999 cited by Hyland et al., 2008, p.6). However, as Trahar (2011) argues '[i]n the UK... the meaning of internationalisation still tends to be elided with the increasing numbers of international students' (Trahar, 2011, p.15). Hyland et al. (2008) concur suggesting that the literature is dominated by issues of marketisation.

In contrast to viewing the internationalisation of HE from a recruitment perspective, Brown (2009, p. 184) defines the aim of internationalisation as the desire to create 'an environment in which cultural awareness can grow in both the international and domestic student communities'. Thornton et al. (2009, p.2) suggest that:

in order to be better prepared for, and to thrive in social networks and work-related arenas which are increasingly diverse, multicultural, interdependent and

global it is essential that students are helped to develop and value intercultural knowledge and skills during their education and that all HE staff, students and campuses model the integration, cohesion and social interaction that underpins their development.

This, it would seem, means the internationalisation of our institutions not merely through the recruitment of international students but through learning from them and changing our practices for the benefit of all our students.

Another focus in the literature has been on the challenges faced by international students and still another, how the educational needs of these students should be met. Hyland et al. (2008) and Montgomery (2010) criticise the literature for a tendency to follow a deficit model and to concentrate on issues that relate to language and skills competency.

Morrison, Merrick, Higgs and Métais (2005) suggest both of these positions seem to imply that international student outcomes compare unfavourably to those of home students. However, they argue that studies suggest that international student performance is comparable and in some cases better, reflecting a diverse cohort (Morrison et al., 2005). It must be said at this point however, that since 2005 international student numbers have increased dramatically across the sector and generally this is no longer the case as, although international student retention figures on the whole compare favourably with that of UK students, achievement figures do not. International students do not appear to be gaining as many 1st and 2:1 classifications as their UK peers (Hesa, 2016). Recently published data from Hesa (2016) for the session 2014/15 shows that whilst 69% of students overall are gaining a 1st or 2:1, only 55% of non-EU students graduate with a 1st or 2:1.

Morrison et al. (2005) argue that rather than it being the student who must assimilate it is incumbent on institutions to change in the face of an increasingly diverse student cohort. Further, Montgomery (2010) argues that the focus on international students is inappropriate suggesting that all students face challenges in the transition from one educational context to another. Such an approach which sees all students as individual in their educational needs brings us to a place where we must consider diversity, widening access and participation, differentiated pedagogies and the impact and implication of internationalisation at home and for all. Indeed the literature has suggested that the

benefits to all of an increasingly international environment within UK HE are substantial but remain unexploited where internationalisation in a transformative sense has not reached all parts and services of the institution and where intercultural interaction is not supported fully (Trahar, 2011; Montgomery, 2010; Leask and Carroll, 2011). Taking Morrison et al.'s (2005), Trahar's (2011), Leask and Carroll's (2011) and Montgomery's (2010) suggestions forward, however, would mean changes at an institutional and curriculum level which would result in the full internationalisation of our universities in the UK.

Internationalisation: An opportunity for intercultural learning

There is a general consensus in the literature that the presence of international students on UK campuses is beneficial for all and presents an opportunity for intercultural awareness development (Trahar, 2011; Hyland et al., 2008). However, Trahar (2011) argues that there needs to be more work done to enable all students to benefit from the cultural diversity now present on UK campuses. Ho, Holmes and Cooper (2004) argue that internationalising the curriculum facilitates inclusivity and the development of skills needed for global citizenship. However, Montgomery (2009) observes that the issues extend beyond curriculum design such that university policy is developing in a way that means 'many universities are going further than simply introducing a change in the content of their curriculum and are moving toward acknowledging that it is the delivery, the social interaction, and the perspectives that surround the curriculum that will decide whether the curriculum is international' (Montgomery, 2009, p.259). However, Footitt's (2005, p.44) study revealed a 'sometimes narrow institutional understanding of International Strategy' with large numbers of courses that include the word international in their title but no 'consensus as to what the word might imply for course content, pedagogy, or future professional practice.' Additionally, lack of interaction between home and international students often means that opportunities for intercultural learning are left unexploited (Merrick, 2004; Montgomery, 2010).

Rationale

Students in Transition

When students make the transition from one educational context to another a process of acculturation takes place, this may result in 'intertwining' where there is synergy but it may also result in 'buffering' and impact negatively on students' confidence particularly where

there are language competency issues and lower than expected achievement (Luzio-Lockett, 1998; Tubin and Lapidot, 2008; Ashforth and Mael, 1989). In this thesis I explore what this means for the development of skills and autonomy in learning.

Direct entrant student experience literature

There would appear to be a paucity of literature that takes the experiences of direct entrant students as its focus. International students entering UK universities directly into the second or third year, is becoming an increasingly popular entry route. These students have to adjust to UK HE practices whilst simultaneously tackling a progression in the academic demand of their course and so their experiences and needs are very different from those of continuing UK students (Barron and D'Annunzio-Green, 2009). In this thesis I also consider the particular issues that relate to direct entrant students coming to the UK to study in HE.

The second year experience of continuing students

There would also appear to be scant literature on the second year experience, the few studies that do exist mainly originate in the US and focus on three issues: the difficulties students face in choosing their majors; an increased drop-out risk; and lower motivation (Schaller, 2005; Gahagan and Hunter, 2006; Tobolowsky, 2008). UK research (Thompson, et al., 2013; Lieberman and Remedios, 2007; Jacobs and Newstead 2000) also indicates lower achievement and motivation in the second year. Gahagan and Stuart Hunter (2006) suggest that the challenges that students face in the second year are significant and that ironically the amount of support students receive in first year may well leave them ill-prepared to manage their own studies when it is withdrawn in second year. The second year experience is one element of the student experience that I focus on in my study.

Self-directed Learning

Both Knowles (1975) and Boud (1988) see critical thinking as the hallmark of the self-directing learner who is able to take responsibility for the learning process in negotiation with the teacher. Magolda (1992) describes a process whereby students develop an independence from their teachers' authority in terms of the nature of knowledge which they begin to see as negotiated and uncertain. How students develop their study strategies and build independence in the learning process is a focus of my study.

Aims and Research Questions

The reported lack of interaction between international and UK students to the detriment of all (Merrick, 2004; Montgomery, 2010) suggests that students are not benefitting from the international nature of their campuses through increased intercultural communication (Merrick, 2004; Montgomery, 2010). Transitions whether they be between educational cultures or the different challenges that progression from one year of study onto another brings can be problematic (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Luzio-Lockett, 1998; Tait and Godfrey, 2001; Schaller, 2005; Gahagan and Hunter, 2006; Tobolowsky, 2008; Tubin and Lapidot, 2008; Barron and D'Annunzio-Greene, 2009; Quan, Smailes and Fraser, 2013; Christie, Barron and D'Annunzio-Green, 2013; Thompson, et al., 2013). My research therefore aimed to explore: transition; engagement; autonomy; the international student experience as compared to that of their UK peers; the direct entrant experience as compared to continuing students and the nature of the second year experience and its impact on final year. How the experiences of others are represented in research writing is an issue of much debate. Denzin (1997) terms this the crisis of representation (see 'Representation, voice and their influence on the form of this thesis' for more discussion on this). A further outcome of my research is therefore a methodology and form of representation that attempts to address the issues of representation and voice.

Aim:

To understand and compare the transition between educational contexts and the development of an independent engagement with learning for UK and direct entrant international students in one UK university.

Research Questions:

- What role do study skills play in the development of independence in learning for the UK, continuing and direct entrant international students in this study?
- What significant characteristics delineate the second year and direct entrant experiences?
- What is the students' perception of the role their peers play in their development as learners?
- In what ways can data be collected and represented such that equality of multiple voice and interpretation are enabled?

In conducting my study, I therefore aimed to come to a better understanding of the experience of learning, looking not at international students in isolation but alongside UK students, who themselves are a diverse group experiencing issues relating to transition and

the development of skills. In this way I wanted to shift the focus away from a problematised international group facing transition issues to the challenges faced by all students in a diverse student cohort (Trahar and Hyland, 2011). I used a narrative inquiry approach, which took as its focus lived experience in a narrated form, collecting data through interview and group discussion. Narrative inquiry has become an established methodology in educational research but remains contested in many ways. How we come to an understanding of such research findings and in particular how the issues of voice and representation are resolved are subject to much debate. In this thesis I use literary methods of representation of research, particularly poetry (Gee, 1991; Richardson, 1997; Glesne, 1997; Clough, 1999; Clough 2002), which I argue can have implications for the ways in which meaning is made and therefore the possible meanings that can be made. Further, I argue that the poetic form allows for the inclusion of many voices and stories in a non-hierarchical manner, making the author's influence on the representation explicit without it being dominant. Researchers, most famously Richardson (1997), have previously argued for poetic representations of research data as a means to evoke the participants' experience whilst making the author's editorial influence explicit. I contend that poetry can be utilised to provide a fuller representation of the research, placing the voice of the participants, the researcher and literature on an equal level within the whole story of the research project.

Representation, voice and their influence on the form of this thesis

The issue of representation and language use is often seen to be problematic within interpretive research as, it is argued, language is not neutral and thus when we as writers create a representation of the world it is value-laden (Garratt and Hodkinson, 1998; Sparkes, 1995; Denzin, 1997; MacLure, 2009; Pillow, 2003). As the instigator and author of any research story it is unavoidable that the text produced will be as much that of the researcher as the participants. However, it is the researcher's responsibility to tell the story of the research, to analyse and interpret in order to seek and convey its significant messages. Lather (1991, p.91) questions whether the author's voice can 'be anything but ... intrusive? How do we explore our own reasons for doing the research without putting ourselves back at the centre?' A view echoed by Clough (1999, p.445) when he says 'having incorporated myself into this work, there is a parallel and paradoxical task now of how to make that self less intrusive'. Garrick (1999, p.152) suggests that although such

representations seek to place personal stories at their centre they can 'inadvertently marginalize the voices they are supposedly highlighting'. However, the interpretive researcher would argue that the subject is an active participant involved in the interpretation of their story. Indeed as Garrick (1999, p.153) states '[i]nterpretive accounts often state that they do not seek to reinterpret the actions and experiences of the "actors", but to give a deeper, more extensive or systematic representation of events, highlighting the viewpoints of those involved'. The crisis of representation is however multidimensional questioning not only the centrality of the researcher, but also the very possibility that language can ever accurately reflect experience (Sparkes, 1995; Denzin, 1997; MacLure, 2009) and thus Pillow (2003, p.176) asks: 'How do I do representation knowing that I can never quite get it right?' Both Clifford (1983) and Lather's (1991) solution is to explore ways in which a range of interpretations can be presented equally. Similarly, in *The Word and the World* Mulkey (1985) includes the interpretations of others in his text. This approach has its critics who argue that in a multi-authored text the message is lost and that it is ultimately the responsibility of the researcher to provide a coherent account (Gorelick, 1991; Stacey, 1988). However Lather (1991) argues that such texts '[demonstrate] that the facts of knowledge, like truth, objectivity and reason, are *the effects of power*' (Lather, 1991, p. 99). If as researchers we cannot avoid the problems inherent in the representation of others we can at least seek to make our influence explicit and provide space for the inclusion of other interpretations non-hierarchically.

According to Sparkes (1995) because of the methods employed qualitative research uses very different written dissemination methods to that of the scientific text. For the positivist researcher whose subject is the natural sciences the position of the author's voice as outside the text is less problematic in terms of the subject as they are not generally able or expected to have feelings, thoughts or ideas to which the researcher may wish to give voice (Woolgar, 1988). It must be noted however, that this objective stance is not entirely unproblematic as all research is influenced by the values of the researcher. However, the relationship between researcher and subject is very different for the qualitative researcher and so the issue of voice becomes more problematic (Woolgar, 1988). Sparkes (1995) goes on to argue that despite this realist position, rhetorical devices are prevalent within the qualitative tradition. Thus he (Sparkes, 1995) argues such texts often avoid the first person

pronoun, use the passive tense, rely heavily on the recorded words of the subjects and adopt the stance of 'interpretive omnipotence' (Van Maanen, 2011, p.51). Through these rhetorical devices the author's interpretation becomes the dominant reading of the data. Sparkes (1995) argues that, as the qualitative tradition places the researcher at the centre of the research, it is odd for that same researcher to then absent him/herself from the written communication of that research. He argues for a style of writing that is at once realist but also self-conscious in that it explicitly discusses its language use and places the author/researcher at its centre (Sparkes, 1995).

In thinking about how educational narrative research can make meaning from the narratives collected I have been influenced by examples of "messy" texts which offer alternative approaches to writing and presenting research (Clough, 1999; Clough 2002; Saavedra, 2011; Guttorm, 2012; Stronach and MacLure, 1997; MacLure, 2003; Leavy, 2009; Leavy, 2010). Such texts Denzin (1997, p.225) suggests 'make the writer part of the writing project' but attempt to provide more than 'just subjective accounts of experience' making space for the perspectives, voices and interpretations of others non-hierarchically. In doing so they 'move back and forth between description, interpretation, and voice' (Denzin 1997, p.225). These could be described as postmodern, poststructuralist texts which attempt to '[interweave] the personal, political, historical, and cultural' (Saavedra 2011, p. 286).

Clough (1999, 2002) takes Marcus's (1994) concept of a "messy" text and creates art informed ethnography. Clough researches and writes as a former student and teacher of literature who has turned to ethnography rather than an ethnographer who has taken a literary turn. I too was firstly a student and teacher of literature who, because of that experience, turned to narrative inquiry as a research approach and so feel that draw of the literary; art informs not merely reflects. Sandelowski (1994, p.60) reveals her own preference for 'a research report that reads like a novel' insisting that 'scholarship can be both rigorous and imaginative, true and beautifully rendered'. She wants a 'good story that is coherent, consistent, and believable but that is also aesthetically and intellectually satisfying' (Sandelowski, 1994, p.60). For Sandelowski (1994) her research writing is a matter of invention from data whilst remaining truthful. This is not easy to achieve, her demands and goals of research representation are challenging but inspire in me a desire to produce something that I feel does justice to the stories that are in my research data.

Exploration of new ways to present research open up new ways of thinking that enable discovery and invention, not of 'lies' (Sandelowski, 1994, p.61) about but new interpretations of data. The role of reflexivity here is crucial where '[s]uch writing refuses to impose meaning on the reader; the text becomes a place where multiple interpretive experiences occur' (Denzin 1997, pp.224-225).

St. Pierre (1997, p.179) also writes of her 'trouble with data' in that they 'must be translated into words so that they can be accounted for and interpreted' and yet she senses that within her research there are other forms of data – 'emotional data, dream data, ...sensual data and ...response data'. I understand and can empathise with what she says and recognise these 'data' as the thought processes we go through during the research process. But I feel that they see expression in the reflective and reflexive act of research and writing and also in the exploration of artistic forms of representation.

St. Pierre (1997, p.180) also complains that the process of research methodology is linear and so often does not fit with how she feels research actually happens with 'data collection, analysis, and interpretation... [happening] simultaneously'. Thus she 'had no idea how to link some of the data with the knowledge that was produced' (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 180). She suggests that 'we should seriously rethink the organisation of the conventional qualitative research report because it artificially isolates those data (literature and voices of participants) in different sections and thus contributes to weak analysis – too many voices, too little analysis' (St.Pierre, 2009, pp.231-232). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) discuss the tension of the place of theory within narrative inquiry. 'Formalists' they state (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p40) 'begin inquiry in theory, whereas narrative inquirers tend to begin with experience as expressed in lived and told stories'. This tension sees expression in the place that the literature review takes within a dissertation with narrative researchers often 'interweaving' the literature throughout their writing rather than placing it in a separate chapter (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.41). The place of theory within research is also differentiated at the level of outcome with the goal for narrative inquiry 'more often intended to be the creation of a new sense of meaning and significance with respect to the research topic than it is to yield a set of knowledge claims' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.42). The place theory takes within the text will also affect how it is read. Quality in narrative inquiry texts often rests on their resonance for the reader in much the same way

as literary writing does thus knowledge in the form of theory is not the primary focus of the reader (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). However, as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue narrative inquiry cannot ignore theory if it is 'to contribute to questions of social significance' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.136). In presenting theory the researcher is in a privileged position as they are providing authority for their interpretation, but in this thesis I did not want to abuse that position by fragmenting the participants' stories with my theory.

Similarly, Guttorm (2012) suggests that conventional representations with distinct literature, methodology and data chapters are often reductive of the complexity of the research subject and limiting in terms of her struggle to represent the multifaceted nature of her data. She becomes stuck and what frees her are poetic representations which allow her:

[t]o cross boundaries and dichotomous concepts, and to refrain from sureness and producing freezing metaphors. For example, to be surely unsure. And that it is important/significant/even reasonable to write from this partial, nomadic place, where I am and where I travel, still not meaning I have to write an autobiography, but just to take this place and stop thinking about whether this specific writing is this or that in some pre-existing category (Guttorm, 2012, p.600).

These ideas freed me to think deconstructively about the traditional text and in more creative ways about the possibilities for interpretation, representation, making and communicating meaning. Guttorm (2012, p.600) offers a kind of representation that 'can break the form and structure and change the way of writing'. MacLure (2003, p.81) also aims 'to interrupt, or disrupt, the processes by which research knowledge is customarily produced, and treated by those who read it as self-evident' (MacLure, 2003, p.81). She (MacLure, 2003, p.81) argues that '[t]exts cannot be reduced to singular meanings. But they can be unsettled – shaken up, breached, disturbed, torn – so that new questions and meanings are generated'. This deconstruction relates firstly to ways of reading but in turn informs ways of writing. It 'proposes that the methodological policing and purification of language, to make it behave properly with respect to its superiors (meaning, truth, reality,

etc), can never succeed. There is no transparent writing' (MacLure, 2003, p.169). In practice this has meant a search for and exploration of ways of writing that 'baffle the boundaries between literature and science, self and other, data and analysis, fact and fiction, mastery and surrender' (MacLure, 2003, p.172).

This notion of lack of containment has been explored previously by Stronach and MacLure (1997) drawing on Derrida's concept of a multidisciplinary literary theory whereby they suggest educational research can also draw on multiple fields of theory. For them this is a 'methodologyof disappointment' (Stronach and MacLure, 1997, p.4) a 'strategic uncertainty' used 'in the (uncertain) hope that this will generate possibilities for things to happen that are closed off by the epistemologies of certainty' (Stronach and MacLure, 1997, p.5). Such readings inevitably and valuably deny 'a final resolution of meaning' (Stronach and MacLure (1997, p.83).

Arriving at a narrative method

It is difficult to trace where my journey to a narrative approach to research begins. I could start in a childhood love of stories, words and rhyme, a love that stayed with me and brought me to the study of English Literature and Language at university over twenty years ago. I am sure that background informs the process now, and I am just as sure that it was part of the motivation to pursue a methodology that, because of my belief in the power and significance of the spoken and written word, of the ability of narrative to describe, explore and understand ourselves and our environment, just seemed right.

It is an interpretivist approach which sees all knowledge as socially constructed, open to multiple interpretations, representations and therefore contested (Sparkes, 1992). In contrast to this a positivist approach maintains that there is an observable truth which can be measured using scientific methods. Sparkes (1992, p.20) defines positivism as a paradigm that 'adopts a realist-external ontology, an objectivist epistemology and prefers a nomothetic methodology'. The main criticism of the positivist approach is that the highly complex nature of the social world is not readily understood through the reductive, systematic methods of science (Thomas, 1998; Hammersley, 2008). It is however, the subjectivity of the interpretive approach which results in criticism in terms of its trustworthiness, universality and usefulness (Garrick, 1999).

These positions are often represented in the literature as oppositional with interpretative researchers generally making use of qualitative and therefore subjective methods and positivists using quantitative methods (Pring, 2000), which are thought to distance the researcher from the data, revealing objective facts (Ercikan and Roth, 2006). However, the now long established tradition of mixed methods approaches points to a reality where boundaries are blurred.

In considering these positions I was persuaded by the arguments of those who turn to qualitative methods and adopt an interpretative stance as they seemed to leave us space to explore the complexity of the social world, for multiple interpretations and multiple representations. On this last note Sparkes (1995) suggests that an objective stance is a rhetorical creation. 'The impression is that any other scientist in the same situation would have been led to the same conclusion' (Sparkes, 1995, p.161).

Where we position ourselves as researchers in relation to the research is fundamental and is the focus of much debate between those adopting an interpretive stance. As suggested by Sparkes (1995) there are those who argue that there are interpretive decisions to be made in all forms of research and at all points in the process and that the resulting conclusions are those of the researcher. Researchers who point to the complexity of human existence and suitability of qualitative methods to provide a better understanding of those 'richly textured experiences and reflections about' that existence persuaded me that those methods could provide the richer detail I required in my study (Jackson II, Drummond and Camara, 2007, p.22).

On the concept of congruence

When I began this research I was entirely convinced that I knew what I was going to do; use a mixed methods approach involving a questionnaire and interviews. As I read more and reflected on the experiences I have had in the past of conducting research using questionnaires and focus groups, it became clear to me that in this study I needed to do something different if I was going to get as close to the participants' experience as I needed. As the focus of this study was the experiences of international and UK students within the UK HE context, their journey and development through and as a result of that experience, I needed to do more than ask questions that would give me an overview and possibly some

insights into that journey. I needed to travel alongside them, if only for part of the journey, and I wanted to hear their stories along the way. The aims of my research made the focus the experience of students as they developed skills outside of the classroom, a space to which educationalists do not, in the normal run of things, have access. The issue of how I accessed this space brought me to the conclusion that it could be most usefully revealed through the participants' narrated experience. I needed the students to tell me their stories but I did not know how I would do this. At this point I turned to narrative inquiry.

In answer to the question why use narrative inquiry Clandinin and Connelly (2000) offer the answer that it is appropriate because the phenomenon under consideration is experience. Coulter and Smith (2009, p.577) concur stating '...narrative research strives to portray experience, to question common understandings'. The narrative inquirer is interested in the experiences of the individual as a means of coming to know that person and as such this approach owes much to Dewey's theory of continuous experience (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002; Clandinin and Murphy, 2009). Again Clandinin and Connelly (2000) would echo this comment acknowledging the influence of Dewey on their methodological approach seeing his concept of experience as personal, social and continuous as central to narrative inquiry.

McIssac Bruce (2008, p.323) suggests that narrative inquiry is a valuable methodological approach as '[s]tories describe human knowledge regarding experience and action'. He echoes many when he states that we naturally talk about ourselves and our lives in a storied way and that we can learn much about our lives from these stories (McIssac Bruce, 2008; Mattingly and Lawlor, 2000; Coulter and Smith, 2009; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Adams, 2008; Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk, 2007).

...if we understand the world narratively, as we do, then it makes sense to study the world narratively. For us, life - as we come to it and as it comes to others - is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.17).

Thus narrative inquiry focuses on what we can learn from 'individual stories told by individuals' (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002, p.331). Reading these arguments confirmed

my instinct that narrated experience would enable an understanding of the individual. That stories are a way of making sense of our lives and a way in which we can come to an understanding of others seems natural when we consider that we are surrounded by stories. We tell each other the stories of our day, we read the factual and fictional stories of others, and we watch stories unfold in the media, on television and in the theatre. Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk (2007) see many advantages to the approach. As stories come naturally to people participants are keen to tell their stories and rich data are generated easily (Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk, 2007). When participants tell stories they are generally self-revealing and honest (Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk, 2007). This may be true but in terms of my research what concerned me was whether the method would cross cultural and language boundaries. The arguments of Conle (2000 p.50) which suggest that '[i]n multicultural settings' ...'narrative' can be 'the common denominator' facilitating intercultural awareness and understanding through communication (Conle, 2000) were encouraging. Butler-Kisber (2010, p.63) also suggests that narrative is a 'universal' 'way of thinking' as story is a part of all cultures 'and all languages have the essentials, or structures of grammar necessary for constructing narratives'. Conle (1999, p.809) suggests that 'descriptive narratives rather than logically reasoned arguments' can facilitate effective 'intercultural communication' as what she terms resonance can be established across cultural boundaries through 'metaphorical connections' (Conle, 1996, p. 305). Further to this, Mitton-Kukner, Nelson and Desrochers (2010, p.1163) argue that intercultural awareness is developed through 'an experiential-relational-reflective process, something that may be achieved by thinking narratively' (Mitton-Kukner et al., 2010, p.1163). Trahar (2008) suggests that as narrative inquiry is a collaborative process in which the researcher takes an active role, rather than of a detached observer, there is a necessary process of self-reflection. This reflection focuses on the researcher's 'position, values, beliefs and cultural background' which can be used to 'enrich research in comparative and international education' (Trahar, 2008, p.262). Thus narrative as a universal form, it would seem, can be usefully utilised in intercultural research but with a sensitivity and awareness informed by reflection.

Trahar (2011, p.42) points to the criticism of cross-cultural research conducted by members of the dominant cultural group as colonialism or as failing in terms of the knowledge it

produces but rejects this on the ground that it 'seems to leave no space for dialogue, no potential to effect deeper understanding'. This does not mean that the narrative researcher need not attend to issues of culture. For Chase (2005, p.670) this means considering how our research methods are 'imbued with Western assumptions about self and identity'. She (Chase, 2005, p.670) cites what she calls 'the trauma culture/interview society' dominant in the West and how we elicit and interpret stories and how that can then be 'informed by a broad social critique and a politics of social change' as an example. Similarly Trahar (2011) points to the western practice of reflection and its focus on the individual as a concept that may be alien to some participants especially those from collectivist cultures. This may be true but it is also the case that reflection is used increasingly in UK HE as an assessment strategy and so although this may have been new to some of my participants initially they were becoming well versed in the practice by the end of my research.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p.66) question whether as narrative researchers it is possible to 'reach across a narrative space to work meaningfully with participants?' Their answer is that through reflective autobiography the researcher can position themselves in relation to the participants and the texts they produce (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). One of the criticisms of narrative inquiry is that the researcher may be either too involved, and therefore unable to make objective comments, or not involved enough and therefore does not know the subject well enough to make informed comments (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that in reality the researcher is moving between these two positions and that the judicious making of field notes enables reflection and analysis. These arguments gave me a view of a method that I could use to access the space and the stories that interested me. But at this stage in my thinking about the methods I would use I was still unclear about how it would work in practice.

What is narrative inquiry?

Polkinghorne (1988) traces the use of narrative in the human sciences, psychology in his particular example, as a way of understanding human experience, as far back as John Stuart Mill in the 1850s when debate called for a new science that would enable the study of the human character. The most influential movement in the social sciences in the late 19th century, however, was one that took an objective stance enabling researchers to treat human experiences 'as if they were physical things' (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007, p.9). In the

1920s anthropologists used life history approaches whilst narrative analysis was used by Freud and the Chicago School (Hatch and Wisniewski, 1995). By the 1950s the social sciences had taken an almost exclusively positivist turn and the focus became the study of observable behaviours through scientific method (Polkinghorne, 1988). It was not until the late 1970s that social scientists found a renewed interest in human experience and turned once again to narrative as a methodology (Polkinghorne, 1988).

Narrative methods range from autobiography to case study and have been used in many disciplines (Hatch and Wisniewski, 1995). Genres have become blurred and conceptual borders crossed, but perhaps, as feminist theory suggests, dichotomised classifications are not helpful anyway (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007). In their research Hatch and Wisniewski (1995) seek a distinction between life history and narrative; the discussion is interesting but there is no real consensus. Their results suggest a possible taxonomy where life history is identified as a sub-set of narrative, whilst another possible distinction is purpose, 'narrative focuses on making meaning of individuals' experiences; life history draws on individuals' experiences to make broader contextual meaning' (Hatch and Wisniewski, 1995, p.116). The wider historical, political and social context as a retrospective means of making sense of personal experience, therefore, it would seem, are important to life history, whereas a life story is "the story we tell about our life" (Goodson, 1992, p.6 cited in Hatch and Wisniewski, 1995, p.125). Their research suggests agreement that life histories are concerned with 'the history of a single life', whilst 'narrative [is] characterised as "a way of knowing"' and as such narrative analysis of the way a story is told becomes significant for some narrative researchers (Hatch and Wisniewski, 1995, p.115). But that is not to say that narratives are not used by life history researchers as a means of knowing. Searching for a distinction between life history and narrative Hatch and Wisniewski (1995, p.126) offer:

The processes of doing narrative inquiry involve sharing narrative knowledge through the telling of stories; the products are the stories of self we choose to tell. Narrative as a way of knowing is important to life history research; it defines narrative inquiry.

Whereas Bill Ayers, one of their research respondents, contributes this in response to the question: What, if any, distinctions can be made between “life history” and “narrative”?:

This is not a useful distinction to me. Both approaches to inquiry are unabashedly genre blurring. They tear down walls – anthropology, sociology, history, linguistics – and why should we resurrect them? (Hatch and Wisniewski, 1995, p.118).

Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) place the historical developments of narrative within a philosophical context detailing not a history of narrative inquiry, but the necessary positions narrative researchers take and the development of an environment conducive to such moves. A move to post-modernism and a dissatisfaction with positivism calls into questions those positionalities, but as Pinnegar and Daynes (2007, p.7) argue:

We become narrative inquirers only when we recognize and embrace the interactive quality of the researcher-researched relationship, primarily use stories as data and analysis, and understand the way in which we know is embedded in a particular context, and finally that narrative knowing is essential to our inquiry.

Over the last thirty years narrative inquiry has emerged as a complex field with many strands (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007). Clandinin and Rosiek (2007, p. 37) offer one constant; the ‘study of experience’. They use Dewey as a means of understanding experience as ‘transactional’, ‘always more than we can know’, ‘continuous’, and ‘social’ (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007, p. 39-41).

Narrative inquiry takes many forms with many different approaches to data collection, analysis and representation being practised (Trahar, 2008) and notions of ‘purpose’, ‘ethics, and validity’ remaining contested (Coulter and Smith, 2009, p.577). It can be seen as an ‘amalgam of interdisciplinary analytic lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods’ (Chase, 2005, p.651). What this means for the researcher Trahar (2008) contends is that methods be made explicit. It also meant in my

experience, initially at least, a shifting participant group; students lost and found; a less than clear path to be negotiated; a blurred vision.

Narrative inquiry is not just about collecting stories or telling them, the narrative approach is an overarching principle where data, analysis, representation are all narrative in form (Conle, 2000). As a methodological approach, it differs from traditional studies that use tools to measure phenomena which are then analysed statistically (Conle, 2000). Narrative inquirers look for more than what is visible and focus on the meaning that participants ascribe to the events of their lives (Trahar, 2011). Thus narrative inquirers see stories as being 'formed and informed by the wider historical, social and cultural contexts' in which they are told (Trahar, 2011, p.47). This took a while to grasp and to be comfortable with; it was a fundamental shift in methodological terms.

So what did I do and why?

Borders are abstractions. They exist as clear demarcations of territory only on maps but do not show up so clearly in the real world (Clandinin and Connelly, 1995 cited in Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007, p. 57).

My methods were based on Clandinin and Connelly's approach to narrative inquiry. In coming to a narrative inquiry approach to research Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) journey took them on a process of engagement with various influential ideas. Dewey's concept of experience helped them to think about the concept of 'continuity' and to develop a methodology of narrative inquiry which sees 'narrative as both phenomena under study *and* method of study' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.4). Thus Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p.20) provide a definition of narrative inquiry:

... narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social. Simply stated, ... narrative inquiry is stories lived and told.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) see the place that people have within research as being central to a narrative approach.

[I]n formalist inquiry, people, if they are identified at all, are looked at as exemplars of a form – of an idea, a theory, a social category. In narrative inquiry, people are looked at as embodiments of lived stories (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.43).

Related to this is the place that the researcher takes within the research and the personal inquiry histories they hold which impact on the narrative inquiry process (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

Dewey's concept of experience enabled Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p.50) to develop 'a *three dimensional narrative inquiry space*' the dimensions being: 'temporality', the 'personal'/'social' and 'place'. They argue that narrative inquiry involves consideration of 'internal conditions', 'existential conditionals', 'past, present, and future' and 'the specific concrete physical and topological boundaries of inquiry landscapes': '*inward and outward, backward and forward*' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.50-51).

Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) examples of working within this three dimensional narrative inquiry space show how as researchers they move inward and outward, backwards and forwards working with the field texts and their own responses to them. 'This space enfolds us and those with whom we work. Narrative inquiry is a relational inquiry as we work in the field, move from field to field text, and from field text to research text' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 60). The narrative researcher is part of the world they study and so their own stories of their research and of themselves remembered in that research become an essential part of the phenomenon and the process (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

They (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) describe a method which involves prolonged immersion in the field and is somewhat akin to ethnography. As such their 'definition of narrative is somewhat wider than that of others working in this field' (Cortazzi, 1993, p.17). They start with observation and then move onto narrative interviewing before producing a narrative which is authenticated by the participant (Cortazzi, 1993). This approach was influential on the method I used, as I spent two years working with the students who took part in my

study and gathered data in the form of interview, recorded conversations, field notes and reflective notes (see 'Data Collection'). I discuss my experiences of participant authentication later as it pertains to notions of voice, representation and ethics (see Poetic transcription/analysis/interpretation – ways to make meaning, page 67).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that their approach is distinct from ethnography because they 'keep to the foreground of our writing a narrative view of experience, with the participants' and researchers' narrative of experience situated and lived out on storied landscapes as our theoretical methodological frame' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.128). This means thinking about the experience of researching the experience in narrative form, and 'thinking about ... experiences in terms of the three-dimensional inquiry space' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.128). Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p.63) offer a different way to think about research and complexities that the narrative inquirer faces suggesting that they must consider 'relationships', 'purposes', 'transitions' and 'outcomes'.

I followed Clandinin and Connelly's conception of narrative inquiry as methodology and method, using an emergent (Montgomery, 2010) approach following Tian and Lowe's (2009) study whereby methods are adapted and extended. Their rationale for this approach argues that it results in a 'depth and richness of data' (Tian and Lowe, 2009, p.663) enabling the researcher to 'capture the dynamics and complexity of individuals' experiences' (Tian and Lowe's, 2009, p.664). The researcher is placed in a 'non-hierarchical' position to the participant through a 'gradually gained closeness' which positively impacts on the richness of data gathered and informs interpretation from the perspective of a critical appreciation of 'the participants and their inner worlds' (Tian and Lowe's, 2009, p.664). This close relationship between researcher and participants is also seen to be ethically significant as the participant is empowered enabling them to 'speak of their perceptions and present personal stories with an assurance that their voices would be met with respect, empathy and objectivity' (Tian and Lowe's, 2009, p.664). This flexibility of approach and building of a mutually trusting and respectful relationship between me, as researcher, and the participants was crucial to the study. My participants were a dynamic group, changing and adapting as they responded to and learned from their educational environment and so I had to respond to these changes adapting to the research field in order to gain as much of an insight as is possible.

In narrative inquiry methodology and method boundaries are blurred and clear distinctions between life history, life story, autobiography, biography and auto-ethnography are sometimes eroded (Hatch and Wisniewski, 1995). My data are stories, interviews, recorded conversations, field notes and reflective notes re-storied and analysed narratively. The data combine the story of my research, and so there are elements of auto-biography and auto-ethnography, with the stories the students told of their experiences, and so there are elements of life story also. The data are represented here using literary methods and so in collection, analysis and interpretation the methods of narrative were employed. But they stand alongside the social, historical, political, theoretical context the literature provides and so both Clandinin and Connelly's interpretation of narrative inquiry and elements of life history are present. It is therefore, multi-method; a narrative inquiry that combines elements of life story, life history, ethnography and autobiography; it is emergent, responsive, blurring genres, boundaries and refusing dichotomous classifications.

Data collection

Dragon's Breath

My study begins in the year of the dragon.

Fortune favours the brave they say.

Do I feel brave as I begin this journey?

No clear path opens up before me,

I story my way.

This is a land of legend.

Are you feeling lucky?

Who will luck be tonight?

Lady or punk?

Dare I presume to ask?

I quicken my pace and stumble,

I must tread carefully.

I feel the dragon's breath on my neck,

My skin prickles as the warm air rises.

Will I be lucky and ride those thermals?

Dragon's Breath reveals the trepidation I felt in the early stage of data collection; it is written in free verse form and was inspired by the reflective notes I made at the start of the data collection process.

The participants

The participants in this study were Accountancy students studying in the Business School of a post-1992 Northern UK University. They were voluntarily enrolled on a project entitled 'Meet and Talk English' (MATES). This project was set up in response to an expressed need by international students for structured opportunities for them to meet with UK students and practise their English Language skills (Merrick, 2004). The participant group consisted of ten international students (eight Chinese and two Saudi Arabian), who were direct entrants into the second year of their degree, three UK and one Pakistani student, who were progressing from the first year. This is admittedly a relatively large number for a narrative inquiry, however, the students were volunteers and participation in the project was potentially beneficial in that it provided an opportunity to meet and discuss their course and studies with other students from around the world and so it seemed unethical to exclude anyone. The MATES project involved a buddying system whereby the UK students were allocated three - four international students. As well as meeting and supporting each other on an informal basis the group met on a weekly basis for one hour from mid-November until the end of April in the first year of the study. I chose this particular group of students for the study as they formed a discrete group, which although somewhat large in relation to most narrative inquiries was small enough to engage in the collection of rich data. They had collectively expressed a desire to engage in the opportunity to develop their English Language skills and cultural awareness. I therefore anticipated that they were students who were already thinking reflectively about their educational experiences and therefore I hoped they would be able to produce insights into the meanings they ascribed to those experiences.

The data collection process took the form of recorded observations during which students participated in group work to elicit stories. I also interviewed the students individually taking a narrative interview approach. I envisaged that both these situations would elicit different forms of stories and serve important purposes within the study. According to Riessman (2008, p.8) '[g]roups use stories to mobilize others, and to foster a sense of belonging'. Whereas '[i]ndividuals use the narrative form to remember, argue, justify, persuade, engage, entertain, and even mislead an audience' (Bamberg and McCabe, 1998, p. iii). Thus I

was aiming to reveal collective stories of student engagement and interaction as observed and from the participants' individual perspectives.

Interviewing within a narrative model places both researcher and participant in different roles to those of the traditional interview, as the participant becomes the teller of their own experience rather than a respondent to questions (Chase, 2005). In narrative interviewing the researcher and participants collaborate to produce the stories that emerge (Trahar, 2011). The researcher's role is to elicit stories. If an interview is to be a story telling exercise the researcher needs to think about how s/he will encourage the interviewee to tell their story in all its detail rather than to offer general answers to questions (Chase, 2005). The researcher must learn to recognise what is of value in a story and what stories are likely to be considered of value by story tellers in their particular environments (Chase, 2005). There is a conflict here as the researcher must predict the story sufficiently to successfully elicit it but must also allow the narrator to tell their own story (and recognise the value in the story which unfolds) and this may be very different to the one that was envisaged (Chase, 2005).

I am aware as I write this of how challenging I found that move from the traditional question and answer format of interviewing to the role of encouraging storytelling. Although storytelling is a natural expression of our lives and understanding of them, the interview situation produces role taking expectations which are difficult to subvert, particularly where participants' lack confidence in their spoken English language competency. It is important to point out however, that interviewing was not my only means of data collection. I also recorded the participants' discussions where story telling happened as a normal part of their dialogue.

I decided to digitally record the individual interviews and group sessions as an aid to recall and also to provide a means by which I could review what happened in the sessions and interviews a number of times. This I felt was necessary to more fully inform my reflection, analysis and interpretation. I decided to record the sessions in an audio only format in preference to video as I felt it would be less intimidating (Polgar & Thomas, 1995). The international students were direct entrants to the university, and as new students were very conscious of their language skills. Indeed for the first couple of sessions some students refused to be recorded changing their minds only when they began to feel comfortable. I

also felt that audio recording was an appropriate method as the thematic analysis I wanted to conduct would be concentrating on content rather than gesture or other signs which would more naturally form a performative analysis.

The Process

First meetings

Expecting twenty five arrive

Expecting discussion silence

Negotiation impossible

Who do I appear to be to them?

The teacher who dictates?

Second meeting

Who do I appear to be to them?

Teacher? I do not dictate

I keep asking questions

What do I want?

What do they want?

I walk on ice negotiating consent

The process of signing consent forms was more complicated than I thought and involved talking through a lot of concerns. One student referred to it as a contract and felt that he would be agreeing to a lot more work if he signed. There was a lot of reluctance to sign the consent forms and I wondered if I should have held off until the next session to get them to sign but I felt that I needed to be upfront and be clear and honest about what I was wanting to do and my involvement with the MATEs. I worry about it now and hope that it does not put students off. So far I have no data in terms of their talk. It is disconcerting and I feel that this stage is so fragile and it could all fall apart so easily. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) talk about the difficulty of entering the field and I assume that this is what I am experiencing now. Although forewarned I am still surprised at how difficult this feels and how unsure it feels. It is this that is the most disconcerting, difficulties can be overcome with hard work and ingenuity but I feel that there are elements here over which I have no control and I will have to accept. It may be that this attempt to collect data fails altogether and I have to seek out a new group. That would be a real setback for me and my research. This it would seem is the nature of narrative inquiry when compared to more positivist strategies; I feel I am surrendering some elements of control. I am hoping this surrender is to be rewarded with

rich data, but if I don't get that where does that leave me as a researcher new to the narrative inquiry approach?

I smile now reading this. I had forgotten completely that I ever had these fears. I have gifts in my office now from these students; they visit me regularly. I have my data and they have gained from the experience.

Establishing the group

They came

I encounter walls immovable clashes of time

But they came

They come and grow in numbers

They come and grow in confidence

Talk fills the room and exceeds the time

Stories remain elusive

I labour mining data saving each precious word

Recording listening writing over and over

Stories emerge

The long lonely road of it

The no getting away from it head down slog of it

Gems emerge with unpolished glimmering richness

I worried at the time that I would not have enough data, that I would have plenty words but not one of them good. Then I felt buried by the data and wondered what I would do with it all. Now I have stories and I can sleep at night again.

During the initial sessions I acted as a facilitator using ice-breaker questions to stimulate group discussion and personal story telling. For these story-telling sessions I divided the students into four smaller groups using the already assigned buddying arrangements. However, the students soon made changes to these arrangements choosing their favoured groups in some cases, or changing around from week to week, or in some sessions talking as one large group. The arrangements were fairly fluid, student-led and typically formed around that week's work concerns, be they a tutorial question, assignment or exam. I recorded the small group discussions with digital audio recorders, observed and took notes. *The MATEs project, and in particular, the formal sessions that I facilitated seemed to provide the students with a valuable space in which to share and collaborate academically. The Chinese students were close and worked together to develop strategies, but as the MATEs*

were progressing second years with a year here under their belts they could share their first year experiences and pass on advice and what they have learned. Thus helping the international students to assess and develop their study strategies perhaps quicker than they would on their own.

Following each session I undertook a process of becoming familiar with the data which involved listening to the recordings a number of times whilst making notes. I later used these notes and my reflections to help create a collective story of each group.

I gave the individual stories back to the participants for authentication (Riessman, 2008; Butler-Kisber, 2010). This was not as successful a process as I would have liked with the few students who responded simply agreeing to my version. I discuss this in more detail later (see Poetic transcription/analysis/interpretation – ways to make meaning', page 67).

I anticipated that throughout the data collection process there could be issues relating to confidence in English language competence that may affect students' participation levels. It was possible that there may be a tendency for international students to defer to the native English speakers. I therefore felt that it was essential that the participants felt that all stories would be valued equally and that I was interested in the experiences of everyone. This was one of the reasons I used smaller groups for discussion, to encourage contributions from all participants, and I intervened where I felt necessary to ensure no single individual was allowed to dominate. This was a sensitive process but was familiar to me as a teacher used to facilitating active teaching sessions. The narrative inquirer must be attentive to issues of power in the field; in a group narrative situation all participants should feel equally able to contribute; in an educational setting the teacher/student power relations should be minimised (Conle, 2010). It was not long however before my interventions became minimal and the students began to lead the sessions taking the discussion into directions that suited them. This was entirely appropriate as I wanted to be able to observe the students and for them to feel comfortable speaking about the issues which concerned and interested them.

The group is becoming self-sufficient now. They come and sit in their established groups and bring topics and work to talk about. They are most interested in discussing assignments and exam revision. They have established a study group really which is working for them. Both the MATEs and the International students are very positive about the experience.

Table 1: Data collection timetable

date	Activity
Nov 2011- April 2012	Weekly one hour group story telling meetings
Feb 2012	Individual interviews fourteen participants
Oct 2012- April 2013	Occasional meetings, observations, tutorials with participants throughout this year
Nov 2012	Individual interviews
April 2013	Individual interviews

Ethics: doing the right thing

According to Richardson and McMullan (2007, p.116) '[t]here is no one framework that can be agreed upon to ensure ethical research'. They suggest that although many schools of thought exist the overarching principle is that of 'what should be done: to achieve the greatest good and to maintain obligations we have to each other as human beings' (Richardson and McMullan, 2007, p.116). However, the situation is complex, 'what is 'ethical' in research will depend not only on what precisely is done, but also on the context of the study and the different priorities of those who are judging 'ethicality'' (Richardson and McMullan, 2007, p.117)'.

For Greenbank (2003) this is a matter of values and an acknowledgement of the researcher's influence on research. Whilst asserting that value-neutrality should be the aim of research Greenbank (2003) acknowledges it is an unachievable ideal. However, there remains a responsibility on the researcher's part to make explicit values and positions that may influence their research. This however, is not straightforwardly unproblematic as such statements themselves can never be objective and value-neutral (Greenbank, 2003). They at best give readers the opportunity to assess for themselves the influences on the research and at worst serve to strengthen the researcher's conclusions (Greenbank, 2003).

Greenbank (2003, p.798) argues that 'research methods cannot be value-free in their application because values will always impact upon research'. Therefore, we can only attempt to make explicit our values by taking a vigilant reflexive stance.

Two main considerations are to be confronted whenever research is conducted with people: confidentiality and 'informed consent' (Richardson and McMullan, 2007, p.117) both of

which are apposite to the interview. In order to protect participants, I ensured their anonymity and gained informed voluntary consent; I informed participants of their right to withdraw at any time; I encrypted all data. In each of these processes I was informed by and adhered to BERA 2011. In order to ensure language was not a barrier to understanding and to enable students to seek clarification, at the point of consent, I used an interpreter. However, the issues are complex and it must be acknowledged that anonymity and informed consent are not straightforward and unproblematic. Adams (2010) suggests that one ethical consideration pertinent to the interview is that the two roles of interviewer and interviewee are not equal.

In order to have an accurate record of the interview audio recorders are often used (Barriball and While, 1994). DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006, p.318) caution that in most cases a consent form that specifically details audio recordings is a requirement of 'institutional ethics committees'. There may be reasons why participants may want to be identified in certain contexts but not in others (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Butler-Kisber, 2010). For instance the information provided by the interviewee may be considered sensitive to their position within an organisation (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). The issue is that recorded dialogue is 'incontrovertible' and therefore recordings must be safely stored and then 'destroyed after transcription or once analysis is complete' (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006, p.318). The interviewee must be assured of this anonymity and be clear of the purposes of the research and intended uses of the data providing consent at each stage of data collection (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006).

The issue of anonymity may be problematic as, although pseudonyms can be used in the written output, during the data collection it is not always possible to maintain the anonymity of participants as the researcher's presence in the field and the people they are working with becomes clear to others in that situation (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Also the storied form, situations, context, place, chronology may enable identification unless accounts are anonymised and fictionalised. Further, although the participants have given consent they inevitably will refer to others in their conversations, narratives or interviews, who may be implicated or revealed in ways to which they would not consent. Sikes (2010) gives us a useful guiding principle for constructing the stories we subsequently choose to tell; treat all informants as you would family. This issue was minimised for me as I was

conducting research in my usual place of work and with students with whom I would ordinarily be working and so attention was not drawn to the data collection phase of my research. Also, the poetic form of representation I used meant that identifiable strings of events were minimised. However, I still had to be sensitive to references to others outside of the participant group. This also relates to how participants are represented in the research text and how much of a story is revealed (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

Adams (2008, p.188) argues that we need to be mindful of three issues: 'narrative privilege', 'narrative media' and 'ethical violence' (Adams, 2008, p.188). Who is able to write a story, the power they have in that position and the influences at play in terms of editorial choices, genre, publication choices and influences, who will read the story and how, interpersonal relationships and responsibilities all need to be considered (Adams, 2008).

Acknowledgement of narrative privilege motivates us to discern who we might hurt or silence in telling stories as well as those whose stories we do not (and may not ever) hear. An ethical life writer is someone who responsibly reflects on these issues, not someone who irresponsibly rambles about life's "difficulties" (Adams, 2008, p.181).

For Clandinin and Connelly (2000) ethics is a thread that goes through the whole process of conducting a narrative inquiry and as such impacts on the relationships the researcher has with the participants. In particular the moral obligation to respect participants' rights to censor what is recorded in the field and their role as primary audience of the research text works as an overriding ethical framework for any narrative inquiry (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Participant authentication is often regarded as a mechanism by which the narrative researcher can address such ethical concerns however, as Savin-Baden (2004) points out a participant will not always agree with the interpretation of the researcher and this is when notions of 'power' and 'ownership' need to be acknowledged. For Savin-Baden (2004, p.372) this is not a question of telling the truth but of honesty in coming to 'shared truths' through 'dialogue'.

Narrative inquiry is a subjective process for the researcher that requires personal engagement and involves the participants in a transformative way and therefore moral and ethical considerations permeate the whole process (Conle, 2010). However, as the

researcher is part of the research their ability to 'control' it is limited (Conle, 2010, p.157). Despite this Conle (2010, p.157) argues that narrative inquiry can be 'a rational practice with ethical intent'. The narrative inquirer must be attentive to issues of power in the field; in a group narrative situation, for example, all participants should feel equally able to contribute; in an educational setting the teacher/student power relations should be minimised (Conle, 2010). I work as a Learning Development tutor in the Business School of a Northern UK post-1992 university. As such my position in relation to the students is distinct from that of subject tutors; although I am here to advise students in relation to their academic development I do not assess their work formally. The power relation between me and students is therefore somewhat different from that of subject tutors. The Learning Development Group is a non-threatening, student-centred space where a developmental rather than a deficit ethos is actively communicated to both students and staff. I started my teaching career in Further Education (FE) teaching on an Access to HE programme. I developed a strong commitment to widening participation, to a constructivist teaching ideology and to experiential, student-centred strategies. As a member of teaching staff in a teaching and learning institution with a strong widening-participation history these ideals are confirmed. My role involves my working with students across the school, in all subjects and at all levels, both UK and international which gives me a unique perspective when compared with other teaching staff whose perspectives and experiences are often disciplinary and departmentally specific. I see my role as giving me an insight into the varied student experience. Students see me on a voluntary basis and in a space which is specifically theirs not mine. Significantly, I do not grade their work and so am non-threatening in those terms. It is this point that I see as providing an advantage in terms of this research and my place within it, as although admittedly I am a member of staff, an insider, I am not a potential gate-keeper. Further, to this my own academic background is not Business related; the students are very often the experts in tutorials in this regard and I actively use this as a teaching strategy asking them to teach me about the concepts they are focusing on in their writing. Thus power-relations, who is expert and novice, are shared, negotiated and interchangeable in a learning development tutorial and boundaries are blurred.

My research captured the students' established working practices. They were not, apart from the interviews, involved in any activities that were additional to their student lives.

However, during an interview the interviewee may reveal personal, sensitive information which may cause deep emotional responses the consequences of which need to be considered by the interviewer (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). Participation in the interviews was entirely voluntary and did not preclude participation in the group discussions. Again, I assured the students of their anonymity, their ability to withdraw and their right to refuse to answer any question. I also gave the students a clear description of the focus and purpose of the interviews prior to consent; I was interested in their working practices. This is not to say that working practices can be seen as independent of the pressures we experience in our personal lives and as a learning development tutor I am used to hearing about the impact that study can have on personal relationships, family and other social and work related obligations and vice versa. Negotiating these relationships and changes, especially when first embarking on a course of study, can be difficult, sometimes emotionally. I was sensitive to the fact that my interviews may bring to the fore such conflicts for some of the participants. My working role has prepared me for such encounters with students and I often spend time working through these issues with students or working in partnership with colleagues better qualified and placed to help students towards resolution depending on the particular issue. I was able to assure participants of their anonymity but also that relevant professional support would be available if required.

Trustworthiness

‘Some may see in narrative inquiry a lack of required rigour and control. But control and rigour in the lifeworld (Lebenswelt) can lead to lifelessness and oppression. We are not dealing with scientific progress, we are not concerned primarily with the sound advancement of ideas; we are dealing with achievements of the imagination, with sensitivity, attitudes, talents, relationships, self-image, success in living one’s life, visions of the future, recognition of impediments to fulfilment and happiness, and so forth’ (Conle, 2010, p.163).

Hodkinson (2004) argues that contrary to the positivist accusation that interpretive research lacks methodological guidelines these do exist but are implicit, constantly evolving and learnt through a socialising form of apprenticeship. However, there have been more explicit attempts to devise such guidelines. These can be categorised as realist or non-realist with

Hammersley (1995, p.75) advocating realist criteria which includes 'plausibility and credibility'. According to Garratt and Hodkinson (1998) realist criteria are founded on the idea that there is a knowable, external world which can be observed through rigorous methods. Prescriptive lists are rejected completely by Garratt and Hodkinson (1998) who argue that such attempts to regulate qualitative research are flawed.

Guba and Lincoln (1989) call for non-realist criteria stating that criteria which aim to pre-judge are founded in positivist paradigms and suggest trustworthiness and authenticity as alternatives (Lincoln and Guba, 1986). Butler-Kisber (2010, p.46) argues that '[t]ransparency, persuasiveness and plausibility are what create trustworthiness'. She (Butler-Kisber, 2010) suggests that extensive and detailed field work and interviews, rich data from various sources, acknowledgement of opposing examples, the use of field notes in interpretation, participant voices and authentication help to create trustworthiness. Here Riessman (2008) concurs, suggesting that authentication adds to trustworthiness (the issue of authentication is discussed further in Poetic transcription/analysis/interpretation – ways to make meaning, page 67). Where a researcher does not reflect on their position within the research, their influence upon it, fails to acknowledge other perspectives and interpretations and those of the participants, trustworthiness issues may arise (Butler-Kisber, 2010). To ensure trustworthiness in narrative inquiry, Riessman (2008, p.184) argues for a consideration of the 'validity of analysis' of the participants' stories 'or the story told by the researcher'. Truth is a misleading concept, narrative inquirers cannot claim to have told the truth, however, they can construct arguments which persuade of the trustworthiness of the stories and interpretations they have created (Riessman, 2008). '[T]hey didn't simply make up the stories they claim to have collected, and they followed a methodical path, guided by ethical considerations and theory, to story their findings' (Riessman, 2008, p.186).

In terms of generalisation '[t]he narrative inquirer does not prescribe general applications and uses but rather creates texts that, when well done, offer readers a place to imagine their own uses and applications' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.42). Each story is unique and therefore generalisability is not an aim of narrative research however narrative researchers are interested in whether others can relate to the stories they tell (Hale, Snow-Gerone, and Morales, 2008). In contrast to traditional research which seeks causal links culminating in certain conclusions narrative thinking always provides space for alternative

interpretations (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The aim of narrative inquiry therefore is not to make general claims but to produce narratives which are 'compelling' and contain enough detail to allow the reader to see their transferability to 'similar situations and contexts' (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p.46).

Narrative inquiry is open to criticism because it seeks to identify 'what is implicit in action, in what is being said, and in what is implicated in the experiential stories being told' (Conle, 2010, p.153). In doing so narrative inquiry is often accused 'of turning truth into fiction, or fiction into truth, freedom into power play, and reason into irrational babble' (Conle, 2010, p. 154). In terms of truth, Conle (2001) suggests that the narrative inquirer must be aware that they are dealing with the recreation of events in narrative form and that they are inevitably informed by other experiences. Matters of 'fact and fiction' are concerns for the narrative inquirer as they consider the meaning that experiences have for their participants (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p179).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p.179) suggest that narrative researchers should be mindful of the common criticisms of the methodology as a means to avoiding 'risks, dangers, and abuses'. They (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.181) suggest that researchers make their texts open to review and in so doing can avoid creating something which is 'overly personal' and indulgent. They (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.181) also caution against creating what they call 'hollywood plots' where happy endings are written and the alternatives are obscured for the reader. For Sikes (2010) this is an ethical issue which calls for the researcher to represent the lives of others respectfully, but also necessitates a close attention to language and how the words we choose might be understood and interpreted (Sikes, 2010). However, '[t]he task of the narrative researcher is not to describe the world as it is, because in the constructivist or postmodern paradigm, that one world does not exist.... They recognize the difference between the literal truth and the story truth' (Coulter and Smith, 2009, p.578).

When dealing with a literary text Garratt and Hodkinson (1998, p.526) argue, judgements about the rhetorical devices and therefore the power of the text to evoke a response in the reader are more relevant criteria than those of Hammersley (1995) who calls for 'truth'. As Garratt and Hodkinson (1998) argue, to apply the wrong judgement criteria is inevitably to

assess the research as wanting. For Erickson (his contribution to Moss et al., 2009) interpretive research is to be judged on whether it is imaginative and well done. He uses terms such as 'careful, repeated sifting', 'careful, repeated analysis' and 'clear reporting' in his description of what constitutes well done (Moss et al., 2009, p.504). For him it is important to make clear recurring patterns and their meanings in order to provide both the whole picture and the constituent details (Moss et al., 2009). The way we see the world, our ontological and epistemological standpoints, influence the way we come to an understanding of what we see or experience, including research (Garratt and Hodkinson, 1998). When we come to an understanding we use criteria whether that is consciously or not (Garratt and Hodkinson, 1998). As readers we come to the text from a variety of standpoints and a text is open to a number of readings irrespective of how the author wished the text to be read (Garratt and Hodkinson, 1998).

However, Conle (2001, p. 21) maintains a challenge of 'sincerity' can be made both in terms of truthfulness to oneself and our feelings, and in terms of how the text is written so that the reader is not manipulated. The challenge of comprehensibility may well lead us into a consideration of what is expected of a written research text when compared to a literary text where experimentation is more acceptable (Conle, 2001). Coherence is another quality that is often used to suggest trustworthiness, Riessman (2008, p.191) suggests that coherence be sought across stories: '[m]aking sense analytically of both convergence and divergence would support trustworthiness'.

Polkinghorne (2007) suggests that the authenticity of narrative inquiry is affected by the relationship between experience, meaning and narrative, which is further compounded by interpretation. This relationship is problematic as language is not able to fully express experience, we are only able to reflect on that of which we are aware, participants may for many reasons not wish to expose all of their experience and their feelings and, the final story is a co-production between participant and researcher whose influence will be felt (Polkinghorne, 2007). However, '[s]toried evidence is gathered not to determine if events actually happened but about the meaning experienced by people whether or not the events are accurately described' (Polkinghorne, 2007, p.479).

A claim is judged to be valid based on evidence and in terms of narrative inquiry that means reflective accounts and 'inductive' analysis which serve to highlight 'commonalities across individual experiences' (Polkinghorne, 2007, p.475). Polkinghorne (2007) suggests that the narrative inquirer provide the necessary evidence to ensure 'plausibility, credibility, or trustworthiness of the claim' (Polkinghorne, 2007, p.477). This means reference to data, consideration of alternative interpretations and a justification for the final interpretation often involving reflexivity and participant authentication (Polkinghorne, 2007). In terms of justification Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p.122) argue that '[f]or narrative inquirers, it is crucial to be able to articulate a relationship between one's personal interests and sense of significance and larger social concerns expressed in the works and lives of others'.

Polkinghorne (2007) identifies two approaches to narrative interpretation: the reader approaches the text from a subjective standpoint and reads the meaning intended by the author; alternatively the reader is deemed to be unable to escape their own personal perspective and thus the text is read from that point of view (I explore how this point relates to the method of representation I used in this thesis in more detail in 'The Act of Reading', page 72). It is incumbent on the researcher to explain their position on this point and thus the kind of reading they have made of the collected texts in their study (Polkinghorne, 2007). Narrative researchers use methods of interpretation which are similar to those of literary criticism in that evidence from the text is cited which supports the argument (Polkinghorne, 2007). 'The claim need not assert that the interpretation proposed is the only one possible; however, researchers need to cogently argue that there is a viable interpretation grounded in the assembled texts' (Polkinghorne, 2007, p.484). For Hale et al. (2008, p.1416) this is a matter of '*plausibility, or the persuasiveness of the story*'.

Both Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Shijing, Connelly, and Phillion (2007) argue that plausibility is achieved in narrative inquiry through prolonged immersion in the field which produces rich data which can be explored in terms of context of time, place and people. Accuracy, Riessman (2008) argues, can be enhanced through the use of audio recordings and a reflective diary which records any decisions made during the research process; both of which aid memory.

'In the final analysis, good narrative research persuades readers. [Researchers] can present their narrative data in ways that demonstrate the data are genuine, and analytic interpretations of them are plausible, reasonable, and convincing' (Riessman, 2008, p.191).

The rules of engagement may be different but the motivations are the same, to create something meaningful and honest. As Riessman (2008) says narrative inquirers do not invent the stories they produce but are meticulous in the recording and representation of data. This leads to the complex issues of analysis, interpretation, voice and representation; whose story is it any way?

Analysis

Trahar (2011) argues that the researcher must tell the story and analyse it whilst alternating between positions of inside and outside. This seems to be a persuasive argument and a natural position to take. As I write now I tell my story of my research but the other story is that of the participants and yet another story is my analysis of their stories. In order to tell the many layers of stories and to create a balance between voices and a representation which is authentic to those involved I must occupy a space which is more than one dimensional. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) point to the multidimensional space the narrative inquirer must occupy seeing such research as relational. Participants, they maintain, are seen in relation to context and time and researchers see themselves in relation to the participants (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). 'Narrative inquiry is an experience of the experience. It is people in relation studying with people in relation' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.189).

When combined with the contention of Trahar (2011) that the researcher must and can move from inside to outside the narrative inquiry, these ideas make sense to me, in that they describe the spaces I move between when collecting data, restorying and analysing or producing a theoried commentary on those stories and the themes that emerge from them. As a researcher I am always in relation to the various narratives and the participants as they are in relation to each other, place and time. This narrative view of experience and of research activity permeates all levels of the process and is at once a unifying force and a challenge to maintain throughout.

In narrative research the participant is telling their story but the researcher interprets and re-tells that story (Chase, 2005). (I include reference to Mishler's (1999) more detailed discussion of this issue later in this section, pages 59-60). The ways in which a narrative inquirer may do this are numerous. Savin-Baden (2004) suggests that analysis should 'shift from lists and codes to understanding the subtext of data' (Savin-Baden, 2004, p.366). For Savin-Baden (2004, p.370) data analysis can often become a 'deconstruction rather than reconstruction' which is reductive of the complexities and an attempt 'to round off the rough edges..., resisting material that will not fit into neat categories and ignoring the issues that we do not understand'. In contrast to this, data interpretation offers an 'overarching perspective that can take account of multidimensionality' (Savin-Baden, 2004, p.370). The focus of interpretation, Savin-Baden (2004) argues, is the participant and the meaning they attach to their experience. This means focusing on not just what is said but how it is said; the language used; how the participants reflectively come to an understanding of their storied lives and also whether and how they see themselves in the final interpretation (Savin-Baden, 2004). It is through language, Savin-Baden (2004) suggests, that participants reveal how they see themselves. She (Savin-Baden, 2004) suggests that participants can often define themselves through placing themselves in opposition to others, but that as researchers we must be aware of times when we do this also and thus how we present ourselves to the participant. Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk, (2007, p.465) argue that narrative analysis involves looking for 'epiphanies' or significant events and the language which is used to express them in particular metonymy, metaphor and first person writing. When the participants are using a second language this becomes problematic as then the use of metonym and metaphor is 'often 'copied', therefore becoming an intellectual function rather than an expression of experience' (Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk, 2007, p.465). Language use at this level of sophistication may also be very limited.

Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002, p.332) offer an approach whereby participant stories are analysed and retold by the researcher through a process which seeks to identify 'time, place, plot, and scene' and reproduce this in a 'chronological sequence' which can often be missing from the original telling. The researcher will also add 'rich detail' and make 'causal links' and identify 'themes' to provide a fuller narrative (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002, p.332). This process of restorying inevitably produces a new story, however, through

participant verification, authenticity is maintained (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002). It is this process of restorying which resonated most strongly with me along with Rhodes' (2000) metaphor of the ghost writer as I was working with the experiences and words of others. I could see that I was creating a story out of the words collected. But it was important to consider that this was not a simple reordering and possibly simplification of the messiness of human experience, and so I struggled to see what it was I was doing with the participants' words. I was fastidious about using their words and not my own; however, I was using the participants' words to *make* a story. I did not add content but I formed a chronology, made links and identified themes, which were needed to make the words given to me recognisably narrative forms. This process of moving in this three dimensional space and thereby restorying created a whole from the fragmented parts and was a process of story-making. That story had many layers and my influence on it was felt keenly in the writing process but was there throughout the stages of data collection, analysis and representation.

Riessman (2008) documents thematic, structural and ethnopoetic methods of analysis pointing to the work of Robichaux, Labov and Gee. Thematic analysis focuses on the content of the narrative and looks for themes across different stories (Riessman, 2005). Structural analysis seeks to organise narrative into a form (Riessman, 2005). Riessman (2005, p.3) refers to Labov's (1982) well cited model for structural analysis of narrative which included: 'abstract', 'orientation', 'complicating action', 'evaluation', 'resolution' and 'coda'. Gee (1991, p.17) contends narrative does not always easily fit into this model and instead developed an approach which uses 'stanzas' of speech as 'idea units' for analysis. Mishler (1999, p.153) suggests that Gee's model is useful in thematic analysis as 'grouping lines into stanzas depends on their being about the same topic'. In using this approach herself, Riessman (2008, p.100) 'took the text on its own terms, respecting how it asked to be interpreted by the way it was spoken'. What she created is a poetic narrative about 'cars, bars, and guitars' (Riessman, 2008, p.100). This method of analysis was influential on my approach as I moved from restorying to poetic analysis/interpretation, and which I detail later (see Poetic transcription/analysis/interpretation – ways to make meaning, page 67).

For Riessman (1993) narrative inquiry analysis is not just about content, but also the form. 'We ask, why was the story told *that* way?' (Riessman, 1993, p.2). Cortazzi (1993) also emphasises form and suggests that using Labov's model of narrative structural analysis

provides a focus on the meaning the narrator attaches to the narrative (Cortazzi, 1993). Riessman (1993, p.61) suggests that attending to how a story is told, its structure and organisational features and 'the meanings encoded in the form of the talk', 'privileges, the teller's experience' and avoids reading the 'narrative simply for content'. However, I found that working with participants whose first language was not English made such a focus on form and language problematic. I questioned whether the participants would use the same words or form to describe their experiences if they had used their own language and so the meaningfulness of such an analysis. This left me with an analysis of theme, itself not unproblematic as I needed to be aware that my preconceived ideas may have influenced the themes I chose to see, as a means of interpretation.

Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk (2007) acknowledge that producing narrative accounts can be a complex process which involves awareness of their changing positions and perspectives. Their aim is to produce an account of the participants' stories both in relation to one another and to the research focus (Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk, 2007). Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p.132) suggest a similar aim of the narrative inquirer in that they are seeking to identify 'patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes either within or across an individual's experience and in the social setting'.

Chase (2005, p.663) argues that in terms of analysis the narrative researcher is not looking for 'distinct themes *across* interviews' but is focussing on the 'voices *within* each narrative'. 'In one way or another, then, narrative researchers listen to the narrator's voices – to the subject positions, interpretive practices, ambiguities, and complexities – *within* each narrator's story' (Chase, 2005, p.663).

As researchers we cannot know in an unproblematic or full way what another's experience is as we only have 'ambiguous representations of it – talk, text, interaction, and interpretation' (Riessman, 1993, p.8). Thus interpretation is subjective as the researcher makes choices about what stories are told and how (Riessman, 1993). Thus following a relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology Riessman (1993, p10) suggests that interpretative decisions are at work at all levels of narrative inquiry: 'attending', 'telling', 'transcribing', 'analyzing' and 'reading'. In particular she (Riessman, 1993, p10) suggests that '[t]here is choice in what I notice', as there is in how the story is narrated confounded by the

limitations of language. Further to this, transcription is problematic as Riessman (1993, p.13) argues '[t]here is no one, true representation of spoken language'. Analysis and representation inevitably are subjective and interpretive and the final text is open to many readings (Riessman, 1993).

It is important to note that narrative inquirers do engage in the task of interpretation and therefore do not 'take [narratives] at face value, but with the awareness that many conditions mediate perception and understanding' (Conle, 2010, p.156). Conle (2010) argues therefore that narrative inquirers use language to place narratives within context of time and place and that this is then open to adaptation which will inevitably affect meaning. Therefore, '[d]efinitive knowledge cannot be attained; complete and final narrative accounts of phenomena are impossible' and so the narrative inquirer is also involved in a subjective exercise (Conle, 2010, p.156) which of course is a source of criticism.

Mishler (2004) contends that the stories that we tell about ourselves change on subsequent telling and therefore we also change our identities. This calls into question the dominant theory of 'one primary or unifying identity that will be represented in a singular storyline' (Mishler, 2004, p102). Mishler (2004, p.118) explains these differing selves as a result of the 'multiple perspectives' we all have ... 'the one that comes into play depends on variations in context, audiences, and intentions, that is, on how one positions one's self within that set of circumstances'. Mishler (2004) suggests that the implication for researchers interested in identity is the need for multiple questioning in order to gain a variety of perspectives. He strongly recommends second interviews of respondents suggesting they provide rich data (Mishler, 2004).

If we see this 'variability' in relation to a perceived desirability of coherence in biography it becomes problematic (Mishler, 1999, p.13). 'The meaning(s) of coherence must be unpacked to arrive at an alternative approach to the problem of how we – narrators, audience, and researchers – understand and make sense of stories' (Mishler, 1999, p.14). Mishler (1999, p.18) describes a 'narrative of praxis' which he sees as a mutually transformative interaction between self and the world. The implications are therefore that narrative is active in that it has a context specific aim and further it is influenced but not governed by cultural rules; meaning is a collaborative process between speakers (Mishler,

1999). Mishler (1999) therefore argues for the inclusion of the interviewer's speech as an integral element of the narrative generated in the interview. Mishler (1999, p.152) also suggests that involving participants in the production of the written outcome of a study if 'complex' is however necessary 'if we seriously intend our work to be a resource for people in their efforts to change and better their lives'.

The process of analysis or restorying is therefore a complex one. As narrative is an underlying principle and not just an outcome in terms of data representation it logically follows that the process should be narrative in form at all its points and so Riessman's (1993) and Savin-Baden's (2004) calls for the integrity of the narrative to remain intact and the reductive effects of chunking to be avoided makes sense. Immersion in the field and in the data are urged by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and the process of restorying therefore calls for complete familiarity with the data; reading and re-reading and listening and re-listening to the data. The debate about content and form is interesting and one that is significant. The how of the telling may point to the significance of content for the teller, but is also an interpretation of the listener; in the reading and re-reading, themes and patterns emerge within and across stories, some of them signified by content and some by form. The final stories are as much the researcher's as the participants' but here the process of participant authentication becomes significant; whether the participant sees themselves in the final story. On reading these accounts a process began to emerge for me informed particularly by Trahar (2011) and Clandinin and Connelly (2000) in terms of the relational stance of the researcher in data collection and analysis; Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk's (2007, p. 370) 'multidimensionality'; Ollerenshaw and Creswell's (2002, p.332) restorying in terms of 'time, place, plot, and scene', 'chronological sequence', 'causal links', 'themes' and authenticity and Rhodes' (2000) metaphor of the ghost writer. This became my aim but I still felt as though I was looking through the mist and seeing a vague outline rather than a clearly distinct and graspable blueprint, however, the journey was as significant as the arrival and the methodology was an emergent and responsive one.

How I analysed the stories

I analysed the data using a thematic approach (Savin-Baden, 2004; Riessman, 1993; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Following the approaches of Savin-Baden (2004), and Riessman (1993) I wanted the integrity of the narrative to remain intact throughout the

analysis and interpretation stage and so I replaced a process of chunking and coding with repeated listening to the tapes combined with the production of reflective field notes. Using Savin-Baden's (2004) combined analysis and interpretation approach I created individual stories of each participant. I then compared these with the audio recordings and field notes checking one against the other for omissions. Using a reiterative process I refined these stories making reflective notes of my editorial decisions.

In the next stage of analysis I undertook a thematic analysis of the stories, where I aimed to identify connections across each story and to the issues I identified as the focus of the study. I repeated this process with the collective stories with the aim of producing a shared story of experience rather than an individual biography. In the case of the collective stories I identified themes, which then became chapters. Again this was a reiterative process where I refined the stories and made reflective notes of the editorial process and my decisions. This was a very gradual process and slowly a narrative emerged with a recognisable chronological development and a semblance of a plot. In this process I was informed by Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) and Rhodes' (2000) ghost-writer metaphor.

My study aimed to explore the experiences of international direct entrant students and UK continuing students' development of independent study strategies during the second and third year of their undergraduate degree in the UK. My research questions were:

1. What role do study skills play in the development of independence in learning for the UK, continuing and direct entrant international students in this study?
2. What significant characteristics delineate the second year and direct entrant experiences?
3. What is the students' perception of the role their peers play in their development as learners?
4. In what ways can data be collected and represented such that equality of multiple voice and interpretation are enabled?

Narrative inquiry takes as its starting point an interesting situation, a lifespace in which experiences of research interest take place (Caine, Estefan and Clandinin, 2013). The narrative inquirer enters the lifespace and lives alongside the participants, 'experiencing the experience' (Zu and Connelly, 2010, p.?). To start therefore with restrictive frameworks of

analysis are anathema to the process: narrative research is a lived experience. Therefore the research questions I had, based on my prior experience as a teacher already operating in the research lifespace, acted as a guide, but not a restrictive framework, to my thematic analysis. From my analysis I identified the key themes listed below which can be linked to the questions I pose above, although there is an inevitable blurring of the boundaries between these themes as one influences the other:

- 1. Communication/collaboration/learning from one another (objective 3)**
- 2. Direct entrant experience (objective 2)**
- 3. Second year experience (objective 2)**
- 4. Criticality and independence in learning (objective 1 and 2)**
- 5. Development of transformative study methods (objective 1)**

Voice and Representation: whose story is it anyway?

‘[I]ssues of voice’ are an important consideration for the narrative researcher who must consider how their choices in terms of who speaks and how will affect the text (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.147; Chase, 2005; Coulter and Smith, 2009). To clarify this concept of voice Clandinin and Connelly (2000) offer the notion of signature as a means of thinking about both participant and research identity creation in the text. They suggest that a participant must be able to recognise themselves in the written text but also that the text must be recognisable as the researcher’s writing (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). In my restorying, I struggled to write with the words of others. I did not want to significantly change the words the participants had chosen to use and yet I had to edit their stories to create a narrative form which was meaningful, interesting and readable. I came back to Rhodes’ metaphor of the ghost writer, I was using their stories, their words but also making editorial decisions and creative ones to restory the raw data into narratives which told of their lives in a way that recognised their value and yet added value. It is important to consider that there is ‘a moral dimension to the selective use of information, underpinned...by the social values of the researchers’ (Greenbank, 2003, p.796). Trahar (2008) suggests that as narrative inquiry is a collaborative process in which the researcher takes an active role, rather than that of a detached observer, then a reflexive approach is necessary. Sikes (2010) argues that it is ethically important that researcher positions be revealed as these influence both the writing and the reading. But there were further issues

relating to voice and representation which I encountered later in the research writing process (See Voice, representation and the ways we make meaning, page 65).

Chase (2005) presents a typology which serves to understand the varying voices narrative researchers utilize in the representations of their research. Chase (2005, p.664-6) argues that narrative researchers will often employ one or all three of these voices: an 'authoritative voice'; a 'supportive voice' and an 'interactive voice'. An authoritative stance provides the researcher's interpretation of the story usually with reference to relevant theory (Chase, 2005). This approach can prioritise the researcher's voice over the narrator's (Denzin, 1997), however, as Laslett (1999) suggests if the researcher includes substantial extracts from the narrator the reader is then able to come to their own interpretation rather than relying on that of the researcher. I agree that readers should be given the opportunity to make their own interpretation of the narratives. But again the process of selection involved in providing fragments places the researcher in a privileged position where they are able to influence that interpretation. It is also a process of fragmentation which disrupts the narrator. When researchers take a supportive stance they highlight the narrator's voice and any consideration of the process by which the researcher presents the narration is very often either deemphasised or left out altogether (Chase, 2005). The interactive researcher's voice seeks to explore the interaction between researcher and narrator and the influence the researcher has on the text (Chase, 2005). Others argue that 'the range of narrative possibilities within any group of people is potentially limitless' ...'thus, many contemporary narrative researchers approach *any* narrative as an *instance* of the possible relationships between a narrator's active construction of self, on the one hand, and the social, cultural, and historical circumstances that enable and constrain that narrative, on the other' (Chase, 2005, p.667). If we move inward, outward, backwards and forwards it would seem that the possible positions are indeed limitless or at least that more than one voice can be adopted within a text and the voice will be dictated by purpose.

It is often argued that a reflexive approach must be taken by the researcher to ensure awareness of position in the research and text, Coulter and Smith (2009) review literature which argues that this awareness should also extend to the literary devices chosen by the researcher in their representation of the participants' story. Related to this issue is that of person and whether to use first, second or third (Coulter and Smith, 2009). Each has its own

particular problems as Coulter and Smith (2009) highlight. If a first person narrative is adopted a connection can be made between narrator and reader however only one perspective can be given as the character can only reasonably tell of what she witnesses (Coulter and Smith, 2009). Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p.122-123) argue for the first person however, they urge that in its use there be a realisation 'that "I" is connected to "they"'. When a third person stance is taken it is possible to see everything and tell the story from the perspective of all participants; however it must be questioned whether the researcher has the knowledge or the right to speak for others (Coulter and Smith, 2009). Further, it must be acknowledged that such omniscience is the perspective of one person: the researcher, who must select the stories to tell from their data and makes choices based on the 'significance' of what to include (Coulter and Smith, 2009, p.580). Just as it is problematic to assume to be able to represent a story from the perspective of each of its actors it is equally so to assume to know what one person is thinking and feeling especially when that person's experiences are very different to that of the researcher's (Coulter and Smith, 2009). As a researcher I can only therefore acknowledge that I speak for others, but through using a reflexive account detail the decisions and choices made in the representation I have come to.

As a writer the researcher can signpost to the reader intent and perspective which can lead to a questioning of the text (Coulter and Smith, 2009). Smith (2009) argues that this in fact leads to a desired reading of the text. Narratives he (Smith, 2009) argues are not polyphonic and usually convey one argument and in order to allow for multiple readings authors should seek to include in their texts details of their authorial choices. In response to this issue in the end I rejected prose and turned to poetry as a possible polyphonic form. I discuss this in detail later in 'Poetic transcription/analysis/interpretation – ways to make meaning' (page 67).

The distance of the author from the events and characters can influence how the readers connect with the story (Coulter and Smith, 2009). Such literary devices as 'tone', metaphor, figurative language and theme can affect the way in which a text is read and should be used to create 'unifying themes' Coulter and Smith (2009, p.585) suggest. The final text that the narrative researcher produces can take many forms with 'fictionalizing, representing multiple voices, and interweaving various genres, such as journal entries, transcribed talk,

and photographs' among the choices (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.137). The decisions to be made that influence these choices are 'voice, signature, narrative form, and audience' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.138). What the narrative researcher is searching for is 'a form to represent ... storied lives in storied ways, not to represent storied lives as exemplars of formal categories' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.141). It is important to remember here that the goal is not generalisability but rich personal stories that resonate in many different ways for many different readers. However, the difficulty for the narrative inquirer is that their subjects are living through a process of change and their stories need to be seen in a three dimensional space (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The stories told hint at stories untold and stories still to be told.

How I wrote the stories

I wrote the stories in the first person because although I had re-created them I still saw them as belonging to the participants and as such I acknowledged that there was a relationship between "I" and "they" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.122-123). I asked the participants to authenticate the individual stories to ensure trustworthiness and a negotiated "truth" (Butler-Kisber (2010; Polkinghorne, 2007; Savin-Baden, 2004). Participant authentication implies a moral obligation to make any changes requested (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The group stories were collective, and I used many voices as a means of expressing the collective experiences and the multiple voices that collaboratively inform them. The result was vignettes of conversations and captured drama.

I saw my thematic analysis as another telling of the stories and, I acknowledged, that this was a subjective process informed by the position I had within the research process (Conle, 2010; Polkinghorne, 2007; Riessman, 1993). My reflexive accounts addressed the choices I undertook at this stage. However, at this point in the process I had my own *crisis of representation*; in the next section I describe how I resolved this.

Voice, representation and the ways we make meaning

The idea/I of narrative.

I am sitting in a cafe not drinking coffee with a woman I have not really spoken to before. She isn't drinking coffee either. We talk animatedly for over an hour, the subject ...narrative research.

Two things become clear to me – I am a narrative researcher in spite of myself, because of myself.

I just am. Because I believe it is the right way to go about this.
I am an amateur feeling around the edges of this.

She sets me a challenge. Gifting me words I can use to fortify me on my way.
If it feels right it probably is right. Trust your instincts.

The challenge is to see what is under the polished sheen of the stories I have created.

What if.....?

This reminds me of my days as an art student challenged to charcoal over my careful pencil drawings.

Do not be precious.

Something greater may come of the energy you put in now, not reckless energy but disruptive in its own way.

Shaken or stirred?

Who cares, as long as something comes out of the mix?

Maybe we should have ordered cocktails.

This poem came early on in the research process when I was thinking about methodology; it is also expressed in free verse form. It was inspired by a conversation with my research mentor and reveals the struggle I was having in finding a way to interpret and represent my data.

As I discussed previously (pages 62-65) representation and voice are not unproblematic (Garratt and Hodkinson, 1998; Sparkes, 1995; Denzin, 1997; MacLure, 2009; Pillow, 2003). In writing the stories as described above I aimed to tell the stories of the participants in as full a way as I could, using their words, without putting my words into their mouths and avoiding becoming central to the research story myself. Lather (1991, p. 91) has asked whether it is possible for the researcher's voice to be 'be anything but ... intrusive?' But we must also ask how we can reflect the experience of others in a way that places them in a non-hierarchical position to the voices the researcher chooses to include and which as fully as possible tells the story of their experience (Denzin, 1997; MacLure, 2009). Pillow (2003, p. 176) is rather pessimistic when she asks: 'How do I do representation knowing that I can never quite get it right?' However Lather (1991) and Mulkay (1985) suggest ways in which we can include the interpretations of others. If as researchers we cannot avoid the problems inherent in the representation of others we can at least seek to make our

influence explicit and provide space for the inclusion of other interpretations non-hierarchically.

Representation in practice

As I detailed previously in this thesis (pages 25-30) my search for a way to represent the experiences of my participants led me to a consideration of the use of literary genres. Poetic representation of data has previously been used in educational research and was first introduced as a method by Laurel Richardson in *Fields of Play* (1997). I turned to it following my experiences of trying to gain participant authentication of the stories I had written, which I detail below. However, suffice to say here the argument for poetry centres on its ability to represent richly the voices of others whilst making explicit the influence of the researcher.

Poetic transcription/analysis/interpretation – ways to make meaning

When I asked the participants to authenticate the stories I had produced to ensure trustworthiness and a negotiated *truth* (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Polkinghorne, 2007; Savin-Baden, 2004) I asked if they recognised the events and themselves within these stories. I made it clear to the students that my intention was to write their stories and that they were free to make any changes they felt necessary. Not all the participants responded to my request and those who did responded by simply agreeing to my version of events. This challenged what I had intended to do in significant ways. I had used the participants' words in the representations I had produced and some of these had been authenticated but others had not. The participants' readiness to accept the stories I had produced without amendments was puzzling to me. It is possible that the students did not see any amendments necessary, but it is also possible that these stories were now more mine than theirs despite my efforts to the contrary. In seeking to include the voices of others equally I had to admit that those voices were now disembodied. I had taken them, chosen some, discarded others and represented them as I remembered. Recognisable as they were to the participants, as a researcher, I had still produced a representation. Whatever I did I left my mark. I could not pretend that the text I produced was anything other than my own. If as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest, ethics is about relationships then it is also about the power dynamics that exist between researcher and participant. My professional role as a lecturer, despite the fact that I did not actually teach or assess any of my participants, may

have influenced how they responded to my request to their editing of what they may well have seen as *my* text. As Adams (2008) says I had the power to tell the story. I had been careful to only use the participants' words, but I had also produced a representation, which can only ever be partial. I now sought a method that would make my interpretation and influence explicit. Poetry provided a means by which I could both analyse and represent the data simultaneously, whilst explicitly including my experience and interpretation but providing space for the interpretation of others.

Tyler's (1986) suggestion that research should be presented through polyphonic texts has led me to explore how poetry could be utilised as a means of representing the multiple voices and layers of meaning inherent in my research. Such representations do not produce final interpretations but allow for multiple readings of the data inviting critical engagement by the reader who is free to add their own meaning. Researchers have previously used poetry as a means of representing data (Richardson, 1997; Gee, 1991), but here I sought a method of representation, not just of data, but also my reflective notes and the literature I had read. All of these voices compete for attention in a traditional research paper and often the participants' voices are the lowest in a hierarchical structure that privileges the voice of the author who must make editorial choices, and those of published theorists who are represented in a literature review.

In the process of poetic transcription/analysis/interpretation I developed, data, reflective notes, field notes and literature became my starting point. These were combined into stanzas which place the participants' words alongside those of my own reflections, interpretations and the voices that came from the literature.

In turning to poetry I was seeking an alternative way in which to present the data to that of using disembodied extracts of data that could only ever be a partial representation of the participants' experience and the research process. I was also seeking another level of interpretation that included my experience and that would therefore tell a more expansive story of the research journey. However, I did not want my experience to emerge as the dominant story and so I sought a method of representation that would also allow the reader to make the text meaningful. Further, I needed a method that was economical with language. I could not give the reader the whole, unedited text including every word spoken

and all my reflective notes. I had to edit the data and subtract, but in the gaps between the words I chose I could provide space for other voices. St. Pierre (1997) writes of other forms of data all of which form part of the experience of conducting a research project. Poetry allowed me to include those forms of data and provide a fuller representation as the poems were an expression of, not only the data collected, but the literature I read and the reflective notes I made. In this way the economical form of poetry allowed space for many voices and stories. Denzin (1997), MacLure (2003) and Pillow (2003) struggle with representation and in particular the balance between the writer's voice and the inclusion of others. Clough (1999) and Lather (1991) express concerns about the intrusive power of the authorial voice. In writing poetry rather than representing my data in a more traditional manner I could tell more stories and include more voices. All researchers make editorial choices; data are reduced to a form which can be represented in a readable way. A story is chosen and told. Poetry is personal and the author's influence is explicit rather than hidden, but it is also economical and here I used that virtue to, not only represent the participants' experience but, to include my own, my interpretation and to allow the reader theirs. Thus I see the method I have developed as not just poetic transcription or representation of data but a simultaneous transcription/analysis/interpretation process.

The Poetic Turn

The poetry I produced took two forms, 'data poems' and 'discussion poems'. The data poems attempt to say in 'essence' (Richardson 1997, p.150; Glesne, 1997, p.206) what the students recounted in their talk, what Leavy (2009, 64) terms a '*feeling-picture*'. I chose to write some poems using traditional Chinese verse forms as Chinese students made up the largest group in my participant cohort. The Jueju is a quatrain made up of two couplets each line having five characters. The Qijue has a similar form but each line has seven characters. I took some liberties with these forms in that I used two quatrains in some poems and I took a character to mean a syllable and so each line is either a five or seven syllabic form and in some cases these run on rather than being end stopped. There was perhaps a large degree of poetic licence, but also a nod to the traditional forms. The following extract is an example of poetic representation of participant data:

Poetry Worked Example

Original text

Huan - It is difficult for Chinese people to answer essay questions, some essay questions you have to think about and they expect you to find the point you should focus on and to hit the heart of the question. I can't catch the knowledge, the point, the principles that match the question to the answer.

Huan - Have you tried to make a little sketch?

Huan - Yeah, I just look at the question but I don't know which point I should...
Huan - So you have the knowledge but you don't know which one you should use?
Huan - Yeah, I have no idea how to write about this.
Huan - The next thing is to read.
Li - The text, the exam, alternative approaches? What is it about? Alternative approaches or something? Some of the words used do not specify how to do it.
Huan - So alternative would be like different options.
Huan - In my honest opinion I think "alternative approaches" means they want you to talk about, the best and the worst.
Huan - I think the best thing to do is just to read as much as you can, it doesn't need to be all accountability stuff, just read.
Huan - I have read word by word and I have covered every corner of this book, but I still cannot.
Li - Remembering is not easy.
Huan - She gave me the question but I don't know how to answer it properly and I can't catch the relevant knowledge to match with this.
Huan - OK, another option is every time you are reading the chapters make notes on each of the chapters.
Li - Yeah, yeah.
Huan - In your own words.
Li - I have done that but I still cannot do this question. Before I came to the UK I learned in China for two years. For every essay the teacher gives you a structure to tell you how to do it, so I follow the structure and I can do it. If he doesn't give me.
Huan - If you don't have the structure.
Li - Yeah, yeah that is my problem.
Huan - I understand what you mean, I'm like that as well. If someone gives me directions, instructions I can follow the instructions, if you show me how to do something then I can do it, but not being shown is hard. I think the best thing is to make a list of all the essay-type questions you might get because you might have discuss, compare, contrast or comment and then for each one make a list of what you think it means. Because then if you understand that, when you get the question you can relate it to what you already have, like a key. Do you know what I am saying? If you have like a map, if you have like a list of words, because essay questions always seem to have similar words. Discuss is one that always comes up a lot of the time. When it is discuss you don't have to give a right or a wrong answer, you just have to discuss the different options that are available and if you come to a conclusion at the end which is an answer that's fine, but it is all about supporting what you are saying with why you are saying it. Do you understand?
Li - Yeah, yeah.
Huan - Do you understand?
Li - Yeah, I think those are primary level.
Huan - Primary level?
Li - I think we can get this level.
Huan - OK.
Li - But to get to the point, and write every point, and the structure of essays, and the words to describe and also I have to not remember the structure and the words, but in the exam if I am nervous I can't remember, so I can't write it down.
Li - I have some experience of studying company law. When I studied it in China to write an essay first you write a definition and then gather links between the question and your knowledge.
Huan - Yeah, it's the same with management I think.
Li - Yeah, but I think it is different in China than the UK. I think in China you write point, point, point. I get feedback and teacher said my structure was not clear.
Huan - Oh right, so you need to bring it together and make it more cohesive so it flows nicely. Yeah, so you start off with a definition and a little introduction. One thing that you should never do is repeat the question.
Li - Yeah, yeah, alright.
Huan - With writing one thing that might help you is to just start writing a yourself, your own notes for example, don't write in Chinese.
Huan - Yeah, it's rubbish.
Huan - I think that's the best thing because if you keep doing that it's going to be harder for you.
Li - Yeah, if you write in Chinese and translate into English it is Chinglish.
Huan - No, no it's not just that, I think also many words are wasted and rubbish words.

Version one

Writing
It's so hard to write
I can't catch the words
That fit the question
They float out of reach
Slipping from my grasp
Grey birds blurring in
Misty air their calls
Distant, they vanish

Make a plan and read
The text
The exam
Alternative approaches
What is it about?
The words they use do not explain
The best and the worst
I have read word by word
I have covered every corner of this book, but I still cannot
Remember
Remember
Make notes
In your own words
I still cannot
Chinese
English
Translation
Chinglish
Make a point
Support your point
Point by point by point
Argument synthesis discuss support expand
It's hard to write!

Field notes
Difficulties with writing appears as a theme in the students' discussions. Pinpointing the knowledge, finding the right words. The cannot catch the words they're reaching for. They slip away. Cannot see them clearly. The experience of the international students and the UK students is differentiated initially in terms of language use working in a second language adding a layer of complexity, but also in terms of assessment expectations; building arguments, discussing alternative approaches and perspective, considering differing opinions and perspectives also is an area of confusion for international students, although the UK students also discuss difficulties with what they terms theory and the lack of absolute direction.
The next step is to group and categorise the discussions into topics so that I can again reduce some data by removing replication. I will then start to look for patterns across topics and to the individual stories. I'm moving coding and chunking and instead using a process of in-depth familiarisation (repeated listening and note making). My themes are:
• Differences between home and UK
• Group work
• Exams
• Happy with grades
• Self-development
• Journey to Huddersfield
• Study methods
• Writing
• You as a learner

Final poem

Writing
It's so hard to write
I can't catch the words
That fit the question
They float out of reach
Slipping from my grasp
Grey birds blurring in
Misty air their calls
Distant, they vanish

Make a plan and read
The text
The exam
Alternative approaches
What is it about?
The words they use do not explain
The best and the worst
I have read word by word
I have covered every corner of this book, but I still cannot
Remember
Remember
Make notes
In your own words
I still cannot
Chinese
English
Translation
Chinglish
Make a point
Support your point
Point by point by point
Argument synthesis discuss support expand
It's hard to write!

Stanzas divide the point into a progression of related ideas and create emphasis.

This idea is repeated often - that our expectations are not always explicit. That perhaps the language of instruction is cultural and unquestioned by those who use it.

The poem is changed from the original to include ideas from my notes and words from other discussions that also fit this theme. So it's hard to write also appears in the poem. Discuss. The words argument, synthesis, discuss, support, expand appear in Study Methods, Second Year and Phase 16: A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's perspective. The stanza breaks create emphasis missing from the first version.

The students' narratives revealed an initially differentiated direct personal experience. The students had a practical reevaluation of critical thinking, in that they articulated their understanding of this concept in terms of the films they had to do to achieve in within their assessments. There was interaction between international and UK students. Skills were adapted, refined and shared in multiple communities of practice within a language of learning. There was a movement from reliance on the tutor as bestower of knowledge to a collaborative construction of knowledge.

(For other worked examples see appendix 1, page 201).

Poetry, rather than the disembodied voices of data extracts, evokes the participants' experience adding value to the data whilst leaving space for and also inspiring the readers' interpretation. By its very personal nature the researcher reveals herself through the creative process. The use of fictional forms composed from the words of the participants gives access to the lived experience in time and space. Cultural, social, political, historical influences can all be brought into play. The researcher is at once within and outside the research field and data whilst also inviting the reader in. The possibility for multiple interpretations remains open, in contrast to final representations of truth about what the data means, which closes these off. Allowing for the interpretation of others means relinquishing some control but not all responsibility. The researcher leaves her mark on the data but does so in a much more explicit and transparent way through the production of fictive forms of representation.

Poetry that combines the participant voice, literature and the researcher's response denies certainty and challenges the authority of the privileged authorial voice. A discussion chapter

that refers back to a literature review, albeit critiqued, underlines the power of the empowered academic expert and places that debate foremost in the reader's mind. The participant voice more often than not is relegated in this hierarchical structure of the traditional research paper. In choosing to combine these voices within the poetic form, that privileging of voice is challenged. I have termed these discussion poems and they are integrated into my commentary later in this thesis (please see page 85). However, by way of an example and an explanation I repeat "Intercultural Communication" here. I wrote it in response to reading Brown's (2009) extensive literature review, which suggests positive outcomes for both UK and international students in terms of language competency; cultural awareness and satisfaction as a result of interaction with home students. Simultaneously I also considered other literature that reports a lack of such interaction (Brown, 2009; Hyland et al., 2008; Merrick, 2004; Montgomery, 2009; Ramburuth and Tani's, 2009) alongside Sanderson's (2004) and others' ideas on the challenges of globalisation, alongside the participants' stories which tell of their experience.

Intercultural Communication

'We assume/presume,
The nature of interaction with the 'cultural other'
Is the challenge and test for globalisation' (Sanderson, 2004, 7).
'It is about who *we* are
And who *they* are
And what happens when the two meet.
"We don't talk much."
It is about *our* world
And *their* world
And what happens when they both collide.
"We have an international life."
It is about me and you,
The colonists and the colonised,
The cultured and the barbarian,
The familiar and the strange,
"We are strange here."
The in-group and out-group,
A-groupers and B-groupers,
The North and the South' (Sanderson, 2004, p.7).
'Family and foreigners,
Native and exile,

Friend and foe' (Zachary, 2000, p.278 as quoted in Sanderson, 2004),
'Us and them' (Said, 1995, p.43 as quoted in Sanderson 2004),
'Insiders and outsiders' (Singh, 2002, p.5 as quoted in Sanderson, 2004),
'The West and the Rest' (Mahbubani, 2002, as quoted in Sanderson, 2004).
"They are brave."
We start with the self (Sanderson, 2004).
"I talk to everyone".
Academic engagement on an equal basis,
"We are all students together",
"One group."
Not a privileging of the host nation's 'knowledge and ethics' (Appadurai,
2001, p.16).
"We help each other".

When the voices of the participants and the literature are juxtaposed in the poetic form a direct conversation between them becomes very apparent. The participants' words are used to directly answer the challenges of the literature and so form a response through their own experience. Their experience therefore becomes as significant a voice in the academic discussion as that of the literature. Whereas often in research writing the disembodied excerpts of participants' stories do not attain that equality, as they can be lost within masses of literature; lone voices not directly speaking to the reader. Poetry gives the participants voices immediacy and an impact that is rarely present in traditional representations of data. The experiences of the students as they negotiate both their newly emerging sense of self and relationships with others within a different educational culture and environment can be clearly seen. The students made a journey from segregation to integration and form a supportive intercultural community rising to the challenge presented by Sanderson.

The Act of Reading

When Pillow (2003, p.176) asks: 'How do I do representation knowing that I can never quite get it right?' she points to a tension that exists between the theoretical positions of New Materialism and arts-based research. Bolt (2004, p.171) attempts to bridge that gap through Deleuze's concept of performativity arguing that 'in process, the body becomes language rather than merely inscribes language'. Thus Bolt (2004, p.172) 'envisag[es] representation as an act of concurrent actual production' (see Barrett, E. and Bolt, B. eds. 2012. *Carnal Knowledge. Towards a 'New Materialism' through the arts*. London: I.B. Tauris for further

discussion). That is not to suggest that this is an easy task, when in dominant western thought '[r]epresentation is reduced to the (Saussurian) sign, the play of signifiers' (Bolt, 2004, p.173), however, Bolt (2004, p.171) points to the example of indigenous Australian culture for whom 'ritual activities produce reality'. Bolt's (2004) main focus here is art but does not exclude literature and her argument points to a dynamic relationship between author, text and reader. The main focus of this chapter is that of text production rather than reception, however, the latter cannot be ignored. How readers respond to a text is, of course, a primary concern of any author. Reader-response theory firmly places the reader as one of the co-collaborators in the production of a text's meaning. Both Rosenblatt (1994, 24) and Iser (1978, p.21) with their 'efferent' and 'aesthetic reading' and 'artistic' and 'aesthetic poles' respectively, contend that reading is a process of 'actualisation' (Iser, 1978, p. 21) in which the reader fills in the gaps that the indeterminate nature of the literary text leaves (Iser, 1978). Thus in Fish's (1980, p.42) 'affective fallacy fallacy' the reader's affective response to the text is valued and the reader becomes a co-producer of meaning alongside the author. 'Traditional research reports' tend to be written with a greater degree of 'determinacy' than literary texts (Atkinson and Rosiek, 2009, p.181). The 'indeterminacy' of literary texts allow the reader to use 'his own faculties' in the interpretation of their meaning although may 'exceed...limits to the reader's willingness to participate' (Iser 1978, p.108). The creation of poetry from data/reflective notes/literature makes explicit the many co-collaborators in its production; further it aims to produce a polyphonic and heteroglossic text. The variety of world views and languages of the co-collaborators resist a fixed representation. Bakhtin's assertion that poetry could only ever be monologic has been challenged by contemporary literary criticism and the emergence of modern and post-modern poetry (Pauls, 2014). Bakhtin's questioning of a unified authorial intent is acknowledged by poetry which has actively sought to disrupt the monologic unity of traditional poetry, creating open texts that include many voices, views, languages in use and thus denying a final authorial resolution (Pauls, 2014). The possibility is that 'the relative indeterminacy of [such a] text allows a spectrum of actualizations' (Pauls, 2014, p.24). However, Fish (1980) suggests that although individual responses producing polyvocal interpretations can be the result of the reading process, communities of shared experience may produce monovocal readings (See Atkinson and Rosiek, 2009 for an example of this). How academics, students or the general reader may well respond to the poetic

representations produced in my research goes beyond the scope of this research.

Rosenblatt (1994) suggests that in reality all readers are placed somewhere on a continuum between the efferent and aesthetic and that positioning is influenced by the readers' resources, previous experiences and the text itself.

Methodology evaluation

Narrative inquiry has many advantages and I have detailed these above (pages 31-34), but it also has its disadvantages. It tends to generate huge amounts of data and as a method both in terms of data collection and analysis is time-consuming. It is not suitable for large numbers of participants for these reasons. The number of participants in my study was large for such a methodology and I have discussed this (see page 41), however, ethical reasons determined my decision to allow all volunteers to be included. In terms of data collection I was able to draw on my teaching experience to manage this number. The large amount of data generated did present a challenge however, the simultaneous analysis/interpretation/representation method I developed rationalised these processes (see pages 67-72 for more detail).

In order to conduct a narrative inquiry it is necessary to enter the field and live the experience alongside the participants. This may not be possible for all researchers. My advantage here is that the research space is my work space and so it was not necessary for me to enter the field as I was already there. The disadvantage of this is that you can be too close to see. One criticism of narrative inquiry is that it can be 'personal' and 'idiosyncratic' (Xu and Connelly, 2010, p. 361). However, Xu and Connelly (2010, p. 361) argue that in practice narrative inquiry is simultaneously personal and social 'moving back and forth along a personal/social continuum'. Reflexivity in terms of the researcher's position in relation to the research is important here. However, this is not an entirely unproblematic process.

One of the criticisms of narrative inquiry is that the researcher's position in relation to the research can have a significant impact on the process and that therefore the researcher needs to be transparent about their role and position in relation to the research (Greenbank, 2003). This transparency, it is often suggested, is achieved through reflexive statements (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Polkinghorne, 2007; Riessman, 2008; Trahar,

2008). But reflexivity is not a straightforward, unproblematic process. In Pillow's (2003, p. 186) critique of reflexive practice in research she highlights that the aims are unattainable:

'Once the researcher knows herself, an other, and truth now she/he needs to transcend this'.

If language is not value-neutral and we can only reflect on that which we are aware, ourselves, others, truth and transcendence remain elusive and can never be fully expressed through language. This does not mean that we should ignore reflexivity we must attempt to make explicit our values and endeavour to provide the reader with as much information about the research as possible in order for them to make their own judgement. However, we do this in the knowledge that these reflexive statements may enable readers to assess the influences on our research for themselves but that we run the risk of making our own voice, experiences and conclusions dominant (Greenbank, 2003).

In terms of the researcher's influence it is important to note that narrative inquiry actively encourages the researcher's involvement in the lifespace and so is distinct from other forms of research where the researcher seeks to minimise their influence (Xu and Connelly, 2010). Contrary to the "observer's paradox" 'the observer is treated as a natural part of the life space' and so the researcher 'inevitably influences the course of events in the life space. Trusting relationships grow over time and build as the researcher joins in with the flow of the life space' (Xu and Connelly, 2010, p. 364). But Xu and Connelly (2010, p.365) stress that it is important to remember that narrative inquirers are not conducting 'advocacy research' and so the researcher must be careful not to 'cajole ... participants towards the researcher's perceived desirable ends'. The sessions in which I gathered my data were part of an initiative which existed independent of my research. The students were taking part in the MATES project and it was designed to encourage intercultural communication. However, I was careful to include stories the students told of their experiences outside of this project so that I gathered a wider picture of their experience and I was also careful to ensure that the meetings we had were student-led and I was an observer.

Further, criticisms of narrative inquiry are that it lacks generalisability, reliability and validity. I have discussed these issues previously (pages 50-55). However, generalisability, reliability and validity are not the goals of narrative research (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) and so it

is inappropriate to use these criteria to judge such research. Rather narrative research seeks knowledge which is transferable, trustworthy and honest: can the reader see something of their own experience in the representations made available to them? Do they evoke the experience? However, I make further claims for my analysis, interpretation and representation in that it allows multiple reader-interpretations, is non-hierarchical in terms of voice, evokes the students' experiences, tells the story of my research journey and has educationally relevant resonance for other practitioners. Do the poems invite multiple interpretations? Do they allow a variety of voices to exist side by side, rather than for one to be dominant? Do they evoke the experiences of the students? Do they tell the story of my research journey? Do they allow others to make connections to their own professional context? These questions act as a guide to the effectiveness of the methodological approach I chose, whilst also inviting active engagement on the part of the reader. In producing poetic representations of the data and by including my reflective notes I have sought to produce a polyphonic, heteroglossic text which allows multiple readings resisting the authority of the author. The students' voices, mine and those from the literature are combined in the poetry providing the reader with an insight into the experience of those students, of my research journey, whilst hopefully allowing connections to the readers' experience. Ultimately, however it is up to the individual reader to decide how closely the experiences represented resonate with their own, but in producing an open text I have endeavoured to provide the space for that engagement.

Whether the reader judges the poetry I have produced to be an honest and trustworthy representation of the data is an issue I have sought to address through the combination of rich data (Polkinghorne, 2007), prolonged immersion in the field (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Shijing, Connelly, and Phillion, 2007; Butler-Kisber, 2010), the building of trusting relationships with participants (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), reflexive statements, inclusion of reflective diary entries and field notes (Butler-Kisber, 2010), a rigorous, reiterative process of getting to know the data (Clandinin and Connelly and Savin-Badin). Further, by using poetry as an openly personal and self-revealing form (Richardson, 1997) I have endeavoured to create trust between myself as the author and the reader enabling them to make their own judgement about the honesty and trustworthiness of my research.

Data Poems

The focus of my study was the skills development of UK and International direct entrant students. My research questions were:

1. What role do study skills play in the development of independence in learning for the UK, continuing and direct entrant international students in this study?
2. What significant characteristics delineate the second year and direct entrant experiences?
3. What is the students' perception of the role their peers play in their development as learners?
4. In what ways can data be collected and represented such that equality of multiple voice and interpretation are enabled?

These questions acted as a guide but not a restrictive framework for my thematic analysis. I identified the following themes which can be linked to the research questions as detailed below:

1. **Communication/collaboration/learning from one another (objective 3)**
2. **Direct entrant experience (objective 2)**
3. **Second year experience (objective 2)**
4. **Criticality and independence in learning (objectives 1 and 2)**
5. **Development of transformative study methods (objective 1)**

These themes were used to derive titles for the data poems which follow.

1. **Communication/collaboration/learning from one another**
2. **Direct entrant experience**
3. **Second year experience**
4. **Criticality and independence in learning**
5. **Development of transformative study methods**

Communication/collaboration/learning from one another

What's it like at university then? Hopes, dreams and the stuff in between.

The following poems tell the participants' stories of their experiences from starting their second year to completing their degrees.

Same, same but different

We are the same, you and I.
Our struggles here the same yet
Culture and language a gulf.

What connects us; hopes and dreams.

Chinese auditing, UK accounting,
The same, but different.
Before we calculated,
Filled in the blank on the sheet.

In school they taught you,
In China the teacher writes
You copy, the answer is clear.
But now we face the unknown
For me, it is hard.

We selected the best answer
A, b, c or d.
The longest is good.
You can guess and win, the fun is the risk.

But here you must explain your ideas.
Through friendly, open discussion
You can share your ideas.
But you must do self-study.

Uni life college life is much the same
They give you the work and expect you to do it
They help you if you ask
There's extra stuff, extra support.
Teachers get satisfaction out of students doing well.
But you need to work hard in the UK to do well.
Like life.
We are not just in a dream
Thinking about what we could do.

Doing group-work

Everyone has to do the work
Delegate and pull their weight
But some do nothing.

Contribute, carry the work-load,
An equal balance of shared ideas.
But we work with our friends,

Only our friends.

UK students think we do not have the power.
But different ideas, different opinions
Expand my narrow mind.
You admire my work ethic, so work with me.

Direct entrant experience Second year experience

Build a bridge

From school to college
From college to uni
From China to the UK
From Pakistan, from Saudi.

Use what you know
But tell me how
Like before
Fill in the gaps

From the first to the last
I missed that you forgot me
You've left me behind.
How can I ask you to tell me what I don't know to ask?

Second year

Builds on the first
Experiences feed into the present
Take the knowledge and make it my own

Hesitant I reach out from the support retreating
Make steps to learn and build
Final challenges too far away to picture
They can wait.

Third year
More reading
More writing
Articles, articles, articles.

Critical analysis of different viewpoints

Your opinion based on their opinion.
Building, building.
Synthesis is everything

Evaluation, selection, applying the knowledge
The tutor gives us the guidelines
The rest we do for ourselves
One group of students helping each other
Studying hard to get the grade

Criticality and independence in learning

Direction

Tell me what to do
Then I can do it
I need a structure
Then I can do it

I'm the same as you
Then I can do it
Don't tell me just write
Then I can't do it

I think you are so smart
Not like me.
We memorize and memorize
And study and study
Repeated labour
Laborious efforts eating time.

Last year was easy but
The second year is hard.
Chinese people are good at maths
But our simple words,

Can you count them?
How many words do I need?
Building them up to frame
My answer, each word gains a point.

Writing out my reflection is easy

Others hate it.
Ok, this is my life now, I will work hard.
That's what I see reflected.

Too much reading
I need to work harder.
We need the teacher to help us.
But why don't you help each other?

It is plagiarism and
Chinese people are not clever.
No!
It's just because it's in English.

Do you ask questions?

I don't ask questions.
Sometimes I do
But sometimes we don't understand a single thing
They already explained but we still don't understand.

I'm too shy to ask
"Sorry, say that again"
He has to repeat it
You are paying for this.

I will ask once but not again
Some ask until they get an answer
Some just don't want the hassle.
But they don't learn as much as the next person.

The teacher says something
You say something
Just be in the discussion
Contribute.

Development of transformative study methods

Study Methods

How do you learn?
To learn
Initiative, labour, struggle.

Follow the rules, follow the rules, follow the rules.

Learn the key points.
But which are key?
The summary is all you need.
But it's too much; it's huge.
Five hours a day.
Two hours.

Memorize the theory.
The method?
The answer?
No, method
To your madness.

Add to class notes.
Do more reading.
Analyse and
Memorise and
Synthesise.

Exams

If we have the question before we can prepare.
Write it out, write it out, write it out.
Then I can remember.
I can write three pages. I can't do more.
There is no time to write more.
How many words for how many points?
Apply the knowledge,
Structure the knowledge,
Add something of yourself.

Writing

It's so hard to write
I can't catch the words
That fit the question
They float out of reach

Slipping from my grasp
Grey birds blurring in
Misty air their calls

Distant; they vanish.

Make a plan and read
The text.
The exam
Alternative approaches

What it is about?
The words they use do not explain
The best and the worst
I have read word by word

I have covered every corner of this book, but I still cannot
Remember.

Make notes
In your own words.
I still cannot.

Chinese
English
Translation
Chinglish.

Make a point
Support your point
Point by point by point.

Argument synthesis discuss support expand.
It's hard to write!

Discuss

This means people have different ideas?
Different ideas, but prove your point
Everyone has different conclusions;
The teacher looks at your reasons so you have to say
Enough reasons to support your idea.
So we don't all have the same answers?
Everybody has different answers.
Maybe I will write I think this one is better and maybe other people will
write...

Just, you need to have enough reasons to support it.
Ah!

Happy with grades

Good grades are shared
But we sit alone with a bad grade.
I try to be happy.
I keep trying.
But I never feel happy.
Here it can never be my best.

You as a learner

I float through life
Grades come easily.

Before it was easy
Here it is hard.

Different standards
Different rules
Different ways.

I try to do my best.
At home I was good,
I tried to be good.

Teach me
I am lost.
In China we practise, practise, practise
But do not stop to reflect.

More thoughtful now
I take time to reason.
I want to make myself more independent.
I want more confidence.

How have you developed as a person at uni?

Every day you learn more about yourself
You learn more about others
It's give and take, that's what uni teaches you
People think differently in different countries

You gain the confidence you need to never give up
Learning independence.
You grow up.

Lenses through which to view experience– another way of making meaning

Before I continue I need to explain my use of the term international students. When I use it I do not mean a homogenous group, what I see in my mind is Mei and Ai and Rashid; the individual participants in my study. Similarly UK students are not one type of learner with the same needs and experiences. Sometimes in this commentary I do use individual names where I am directly speaking about one individual, and sometimes I use the collective terms. This is when those groups of students are all in agreement, where they have all expressed an idea or described a shared experience. So where I say ‘all’ student participants, or the UK students or international, or Chinese it is not because I am seeing them as, or grouping them into a stereotypical group, or ascribing the experience of one to all, it is because in that instance all of the students or all of the members of a group did say, describe, express the same idea. The terms international students and UK students can and do group together many cultures obscuring difference. However, the fact that some students have come to the UK from other countries to study is significant, I need to be able to identify them in this commentary, in the same way that I need to identify direct entrant students and continuing students, as this differentiates their experience. So these terms are not used for convenience, or unthinkingly, but for the want of better terms.

My study aimed to explore the experiences of international direct entrant students and UK continuing students’ development of independent study strategies during the second and third year of their undergraduate degree in the UK. My research questions were:

1. What role do study skills play in the development of independence in learning for the UK, continuing and direct entrant international students in this study?
2. What significant characteristics delineate the second year and direct entrant experiences?
3. What is the students’ perception of the role their peers play in their development as learners?
4. In what ways can data be collected and represented such that equality of multiple voice and interpretation are enabled?

These questions relate to the key themes that I see emerging from the students' stories and are listed below:

1. **Communication/collaboration/learning from one another (objective 3)**
2. **Direct entrant experience (objective 2)**
3. **Second year experience (objective 2)**
4. **Criticality and independence in learning (objective 1 and 2)**
5. **Development of transformative study methods (objective 1)**

These themes form the structure of this chapter as I offer my comments on each one. This therefore then is my view as I travelled alongside these students, observed them, interacted with them, taught some of them in tutorials, interviewed and chatted with them.

1. **Communication/collaboration/learning from one another**
2. **Direct entrant experience**
3. **Second year experience**
4. **Criticality and independence in learning**
5. **Development of transformative study methods**

Communication/collaboration/learning from one another

Intercultural Communication

'We assume/presume,

The nature of interaction with the 'cultural other'

Is the challenge and test for globalisation' (Sanderson, 2004, p.7).

'It is about who *we* are

And who *they* are

And what happens when the two meet'.

"We don't talk much."

'It is about *our* world

And *their* world

And what happens when they both collide'.

"We have an international life."

'It is about me and you,

The colonists and the colonised,

The cultured and the barbarian,

The familiar and the strange',

"We are strange here."

'The in-group and out-group,
A-groupers and B-groupers,
The North and the South' (Sanderson, 2004, p.7).
'Family and foreigners,
Native and exile,
Friend and foe' (Zachary, 2000, p.278, cited in Sanderson, 2004),
'Us and them' (Said, 1995, p.43, cited in Sanderson, 2004),
'Insiders and outsiders' (Singh, 2002, p.5, cited in Sanderson, 2004),
'The West and the Rest' (Mahbubani, 2002, p.13, cited in Sanderson, 2004).
"They are brave."
We start with the self (Sanderson, 2004).
"I talk to everyone".
Academic engagement on an equal basis,
"We are all students together",
"One group."
Not a privileging of the host nation's 'knowledge and ethics' (Appadurai,
2001, p.16).
"We help each other".

One of the strongest stories to emerge from my study was that of the cooperation and collaboration between the participants.

Just listening to the tapes it is clear that it is not just the international students who struggle there are challenges for all students. The UK students see the Chinese students as very proficient in maths whereas they struggle. The Chinese students struggle more with the written work because of language and lack of understanding of expectations. There are informal study support groups where student help each other the students talk about helping each other and helping international students mutually.

An aspect of personal development that appears to be of significance in the literature is the level and nature of intercultural communication and learning that takes place amongst students. Brown's (2009) extensive literature review suggests positive outcomes for both UK and international students in terms of language competency, cultural awareness and satisfaction as a result of interaction with home students. However, much of the literature reports a lack of such interaction (Brown, 2009; Hyland et al., 2008; Merrick, 2004; Montgomery, 2009; Ramburuth and Tani's, 2009). The relationship between social integration and student satisfaction was identified by The Council for International

Education's 2004 study along with the difficulties international students report they encounter in making UK friends both within university and in the wider community (Merrick, 2004).

Despite this literature (Merrick, 2004; Hyland et al., 2008; Brown, 2009; Montgomery, 2009; Ramburuth and Tani's, 2009) suggesting that there is little interaction between UK and international students, the participants in my study spoke frequently of strong cross-cultural support groups. It could be argued that as members of a formal initiative designed to encourage such interaction they were predisposed and/or encouraged by the MATEs project to form such friendships. However, they also described this as being common amongst all students on their course; the majority of whom did not participate in the MATEs scheme. Although my international participants expressed intercultural friendships as a goal of study abroad, these relationships were not formed immediately or easily. After an initial period of separation both international and UK students started to look outside of their mono-cultural working groups: as a result of a process of realisation that peers were valuable; a growing realisation that the work was increasingly challenging and so support was needed; a re-evaluation of the self-sustainability of mono-cultural working groups; a growing confidence in language, abilities, knowledge and self; a growing confidence that enabled students to reveal themselves and their weaknesses to others; a growing maturity; and a determination to do well. Cross-cultural working groups formed out of necessity, in the end these were students who all were challenged by the academic course on which they were studying and who came to realise that they could do better by working together for mutual benefit (see further discussion in CofP section, page 109).

The literature suggests that intercultural group-working is fraught with difficulties (Montgomery, 2009; Trahar and Hyland, 2011). In Brown's (2009) study international students tended to stay within mono-cultural groups, despite a wish to benefit from the experience that intercultural communication brings, as a reaction to the practical, cultural and linguistic challenges of their new and unfamiliar environment. Brown's (2009) study suggests that to a certain extent this behaviour was self-defeating as others perceived these close-knit groups as impenetrable. Further, the students reported deterioration in their English language ability as a result of too much time speaking their mother tongue (Brown, 2009). Montgomery (2010) argues that

international students generally regard English Language competency as central to global competency and autonomy.

Both Montgomery's (2009) and Trahar and Hyland's (2011) studies reveal difficulties surrounding inter-cultural group-work pedagogy but an awareness of the potential benefits to be gained by enhancing this practice. Montgomery's (2009) study seeks to measure differences in students' attitudes to mixed group work when compared to Volet and Ang's (1998) study. Volet and Ang's (1998) study suggested that interactions between UK and international students were limited and thus the potential for intercultural competency development was also limited. Conversely, Montgomery's (2009) study sees changing attitudes where students see working with students from other cultures as beneficial. Although group-work was not without its issues these were subject specific rather than cultural and language related (Montgomery, 2009). This is not to say that language was not an issue in some cases and indeed low English language competency did hinder some group-work activities (Montgomery, 2009). Interactions between students in the study appeared to be more frequent than in Volet and Ang's (1998) study and took place outside of the study environment (Montgomery, 2009).

This study suggests that in particular contexts attitudes to working in cross-cultural groups at university may be changing. Students appear to be developing an awareness of the complexity of culture and beginning to perceive diversity within their own nationalities and within the nationalities of others (Montgomery, 2009, p. 267).

Similarly, Trahar and Hyland's (2011) study revealed difficulties surrounding inter-cultural group-work pedagogy but an awareness of the potential benefits to be gained by enhancing this practice.

In contrast Tian and Lowe's study (2009, p.667) shows that attempts at group-working practices '[r]ather than promoting intercultural exchange and understanding' became '[s]ources of discomfort' where Chinese students were marginalised and often deferred to UK students. They (Tian and Lowe, 2009, p.668) report students staying within their mono-cultural groups both inside and outside the classroom with one

respondent in particular firmly expressing a 'them' and 'us' 'separation'. Cortazzi and Jin's (1996) study suggests that a tension exists in that collectivist cultures encourage working together but Western teachers often suspected collusion, leading to confusion between appropriate collaborative working practices and the requirements of individual assessment.

Dunne (2013) found that home students made the decision to work with international students based on a balance between the effort involved and the perceived benefits. I would argue that this strategic use of peers is not limited to relations between home and international students, but was a feature of all academic working relationships between the students in my study. Other studies have found that home students are 'differentially predisposed towards seeking and making the most of intercultural experiences' (Harrison, 2015, p.418). Harrison's (2012, p.233) earlier study finds a positive correlation between 'cultural intelligence' and 'a multicultural upbringing', 'gender', 'openness', 'agreeableness', 'language ability', and 'an international orientation'. Whilst, Montgomery (2009), also highlights a multicultural background as an influential factor. Significantly, all of the UK volunteers in my study were British-Asian males.

Urban and Bierlein Palmer (2014) and Spiro (2014) both suggest that for meaningful interactions to take place between these two groups of students structured opportunities need to be created. Similarly, Cruickshank, Chen, and Warren (2012, p. 807) emphasize the need for careful planning and management of such activities so that they are explicitly related to 'subject specific outcomes', and in order to address potentially limiting power relationships between students by enabling each member to take on the role of 'expert' in response to the requirements of the task. One way in which group-work has been explicitly related to outcomes is through assessment and grade allocation. However, although Cotton, George, and Joyner (2013, p.281) agree that attaching an assessment tariff to these activities can be motivational for students, this should 'be minimised in order to encourage students to focus on the benefits of inter-cultural interaction'. They (Cotton et al., 2013, p.281) argue that assessment 'diverts students' focus away from social learning experiences' and argue instead for the '[a]ssessment of process (e.g. peer or self-assessment of discussion facilitation or success in a given role)' as a means of encouraging participation by students. However, 'just as students exhibit differential skills in dealing with cultural

diversity, so must teaching staff', (Harrison, 2015, p.421) and so there are differentiated opportunities for students.

Hyland et al. (2008) recommend a pedagogical practice that explicitly seeks to provide space for intercultural learning. Haigh (2002) suggests that these initiatives should address home students for whom working inter-culturally is relatively new as they do not have the travel experiences of their international student peers. This refocusing on UK students could also instigate a move away from the tendency to apply a deficit model to the international student (Leonard, Pelletier and Morley, 2003).

Formal interventions that seek to encourage intercultural group working received a mixed reception from the participants in my study. For some international students, who reported rejection by UK students, these formal arrangements were seen as favourable. They wanted to work with UK students, but previous rejection made them reluctant to ask again and, left to their own devices, they saw this positive learning experience closed to them. Some wanted to work with their friends because to do so was easier. In contrast the UK students wanted to work with the international students as they believed they had a good work ethic and were good at maths. Language was an issue initially. However, by third year mixed groups seemed to be the norm both for formally assessed work and informal study groups.

The issues surrounding group-work practices were perhaps felt keenly when students were engaging in assessed group-work activities where the stakes were perceived to be high, but did not appear to be limited to international students. The complaint that not all students were as motivated and willing to contribute to a collaborative project was a common one and not perceived to be allied to any one group of students in particular but was seen as an individual character trait independent of nationality. That is not to say that the students did not see the benefits of group working as well as the pitfalls. A sense of risk to grades, time constraints, lack of experience, lack of incentive, lack of confidence could all be contributory factors to some UK students' reluctance to work with international students. But in my study students from different cultural backgrounds with different entry points on to the course all talked of having developed productive collaborative working practices by the final year of their course; practices borne out of necessity in response to the shared challenges of academic study.

The ability to make friends across cultures and languages was seen as confidence boosting and was transformational for these students who now looked to further experiences with little fear and much hope of further success. Some had gained new perspectives and saw the experience as enhancing in terms of their world view, maturity and ambitions. There was, it would seem from the students' stories, much to be gained from working together cross-culturally. These relationships were however, negotiated haphazardly and were hindered by stereotypical misunderstanding and a privileging of the UK based first year experience over that of others, but did seem to be helped by interventions to facilitate mixed working groups.

In Hyland et al.'s (2008) study students were positive about the opportunity for intercultural communication but it seems that it is the international students rather than the UK students who are taking advantage the most. Indeed they (Hyland et al., 2008, p.28) state that '[o]ne of the most striking findings of this project was the lack of engagement of home students with internationalisation either personally or pedagogically'. Hyland et al.'s (2008) study suggests that international students are gaining an international experience on our campuses making friends with other international students more frequently than their UK counterparts. In contrast the UK participants in my study suggested that they had a varied friendship group and seemed to be benefitting as much as any other student from these relationships.

Sanderson (2004, p. 14) sees the nature of interaction with the 'cultural other' as the challenge and test of globalisation. He calls for an 'existentialist' approach to 'internationalisation' (Sanderson, 2004, p.3). Existentialists argue that an individual has free will and that through personal engagement with an 'insecure world' they will '[gain] a sense of [their] own identity by living an "authentic" life' (Sanderson, 2004, p.3). This position and its proponents are criticised as 'highly abstract' and 'subjective' (Sanderson, 2004, p.4). In turn existentialists criticise rationalist ways of knowing as reductive arguing that human existence is 'best studied from inside a subject's experience rather than outside' (Sanderson, 2004, p.2).

Although globalisation has resulted in an increase in contact with the 'cultural other' 'understanding, acceptance and tolerance' remain challenging (Sanderson, 2004, p.14). For

Sanderson (2004) the answer is obvious but demanding, given the previous comment; internationalisation must start with the self. Appadurai (2001, p.16) argues for an internationalisation within academic research practice which invites contributions from academics about 'what counts as new knowledge and what communities of judgement and accountability they might judge to be central in the pursuit of such knowledge', rather than demanding 'unquestioned prior adherence to a quite specific research ethic'.

However, as Sanderson (2004) says although global student mobility has resulted in more frequent contact between cultures, misunderstandings and expectations based on stereotypes remain. Initially my participants' relationships were informed by stereotypes to a certain extent. Chinese students were thought to have strong mathematical ability, whilst the UK students were thought to be stronger in terms of writing and theoretically based argumentation. Strong mono-cultural groups were seen to be the norm for most students and were seen to make intercultural relationships difficult for all. Cliques that had formed during previous years of study, whether that was a UK based first year or elsewhere, made for lasting friendships but also closed ones. Despite this the students sought other relationships and were successful in doing so.

There was initially a distinction made between the Chinese students and other international students in that they were perceived to be more likely to stay within a mono-cultural group. This may have been because they formed the largest cultural group among the university's international cohort. Also they were direct entrants into the second year, joining a cohort that had already formed social groups and networks, which made it difficult for them to integrate. Further, they mostly came to the UK from one institution and so they too already knew one another and had their own social groups.

Zhao, Kuh and Carrini's (2005) study compared the engagement of international and American students and suggests that the impact of both low and high density of international students could have consequences that need to be understood. They suggest that a low percentage of international students could lead to 'isolation', but conversely where there are large numbers of international students there is the possibility of segregated social groups and large amounts of socialising only within those groups (Zhao et al.'s, 2005, p. 25). This argument could readily be applied to home students who already

have a high density campus presence. Zhao et al.'s (2005) study has particular relevance to my study which was conducted in the business school of a university which sees large cohorts of students transferring together from feeder institutions through international agreements. They (Zhao et al., 2005) suggest that high density numbers from one country of origin can result in a self-sufficient group with little need for intercultural interaction. However, in my study this self-sufficiency was not sustained into the third year when the challenges of the course, a desire to meet and learn from others and growing confidence, fostered intercultural working relationships despite the high density numbers (there were 629 Chinese students in the University Business School where this study was conducted in the academic year 11/12 and 1193 in 12/13).

Identity

Culture and identity

'The concept of culture I espouse
...is essentially a semiotic one.

Believing,

With Max Webber,

That man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun,
I take culture to be those webs,

And the analysis of it to be therefore not

An experimental science in search of law but

An interpretative one in search of meaning' (Geertz 1973, p.5)

'True-self' static, known to us and others

Questioned as a product of culture, language, time, place (Barker and Galasiński, 2001; Flottum, Dahl and Kinn, 2006)

A western concept not central to collectivist cultures (Barker and Galasiński, 2001).

"Us"

"Them"

"We"

"They"

Through an 'ongoing creation of narratives'

"I'm not smart"

"I'm lazy"

"I'm nervous"

We construct ourselves as auto-biographers (Barker and Galasiński, 2001).

'Cultures are constituted through ongoing struggles' (Doherty and Singh, 2005, p. 53).

"Pakistani young people are so smart"

“Chinese people are not clever”

“Chinese students are always shy”

“Chinese people are good at maths”

Collective cultural identities are made and re-made relationally through contact with people socially and historically categorized as ‘Other’.

The teaching of international students in western institutions – an exercise in ‘How the west is done’

“English people are more clever”

Perhaps the

‘Other’ is outside (Doherty and Singh, 2005, p.53).

“This life gives me confidence,

This life makes me positive.”

Identity, it is suggested, is a product of culture, language, time and place (Barker and Galasiński, 2001; Flottum et al., 2006). According to Doherty and Singh (2005, p.53) ‘[c]ultures are constituted through ongoing struggles’. Thus collective cultural identities are made and re-made relationally through contact with people socially and historically categorized as *Other*. It is possible therefore to see educational programmes delivered in western institutions to international students as ‘engaged in cultural production, producing and enacting an account of ‘how the West is done’ pedagogically that position the international student as outsider or Other’ (Doherty and Singh, 2005, p.53). The categorization as *Other* is according to Doherty and Singh (2005, p. 53) ‘typically constructed in negative or deficit terms and as potentially risky to the western traditions of the university’. Tian and Lowe’s (2009, p.663) study of Chinese students’ experiences within UK HE shows that how participants recreate and understand their experiences is influenced by ‘national identity’, ‘gender’, ‘level of study’, ‘time spent in the country’, ‘personality’ and ‘personal histories’. Participants were subject to ‘prejudice, discrimination and hostility in their everyday lives’ (Tian and Lowe, 2009, p.670). ‘They commonly perceived themselves as being positioned as outsiders and foreign ‘others’ in the host country, which led to feelings of suffering, anger, pain and loss’ (Tian and Lowe, 2009, p.670). Few participants had significant relationships with UK students and where one respondent reported this sort of engagement it had come at the cost of her Chinese friendships (Tian and Lowe, 2009).

Montgomery (2010) comments that international students are likely to be often asked their country of origin and so in a new context their identity becomes more firmly defined by

their nationality thus she argues emphasising national stereotypes. Despite this the experience of living and learning in a new cultural context can promote a new sense of self (Montgomery, 2010).

The notion of identity amongst the students in my study was a shifting one (Barker and Galasiński, 2001; Flottum et al., 2006; Doherty and Singh, 2005) as the students developed their sense of self in a new educational context and in relation to those around them. Duzak's (2002, p.6) suggestion that when we use '*we* and *they*' we are expressing a sense of group identity, can be applied to the students in my study. They did use language which would suggest an 'us', 'them' dichotomy. Perhaps this was felt more strongly by the direct entrant international students. But this sense of 'us' and 'them' was an early reaction in terms of national groups and was eliminated as the students progressed on to their final year of study. The 'us' and 'them' dichotomy meant different things at different times and defined groups relationally as they moved in relation to one another. Who we are is in a state of flux having geographical, cultural, national and social dimensions. Thus 'us' and 'them' were international/UK, students who stayed within culturally homogenous groupings and those who sought out new friendships and experiences, students who wanted to study hard and get good grades and those who did not, students and tutors. The trend for homogenised groups built around nationalities, culture and language that is reported in UK HE (Merrick, 2004; Hyland et al., 2008; Brown, 2009; Montgomery, 2009; Ramburuth and Tani's, 2009) certainly seemed to exist within this group in the initial stages of their studies, however, although it was a slow process, integration, cooperation and intercultural collaboration and understanding did develop by the students' final year of study. There developed a shared understanding that helping one another, supporting each other and learning from one another, was the best way in which they could meet the challenges of the course. The students sought out working relationships with those they saw as best qualified to support them in their learning regardless of nationality. Knowledge, experience and work ethic were the criteria by which friends were judged useful.

Language and identity

Language and identity

'Language is a medium through which others understand us...

Who we are' (Montgomery, 2010, p. 36).

"It is our language.

It is the same.”
 Language is home and comfort where all else is alien (Brown, 2009)
 “Chinese students,
 You’re very close together, it’s true isn’t it?
 You have your own jokes,
 You have your own everything,
 It’s good you help each other I think.”
 Isn't that the same for everyone?
 “They have the language”.
 “My English is not good”
 Misinterpreted as
 Lack of subject knowledge
 Misunderstood
 Self (Montgomery, 2010).
 “The language is different
 Maybe they think I will not have enough power to do it together with them”
 Adaptation is stressful (Gu, Schweisfurth and Day, 2010) and one-sided?
 “I try to be good here”
 “At the beginning maybe people didn't want to make new friends
 At the beginning we asked local students to work with us
 At the beginning they said no
 That made us shy
 So we don’t ask” anymore.
 UK college to university.
 Not such a big change but a change nonetheless.
 New places, faces, challenges to face.
 The desire for the familiar and comfortable no less a pull.
 Unbreakable friendships forged.
 A closed circle of ties, of time spent together not language or culture.
 Space remains for integration
 We align ourselves with others where we see commonality
 ‘Values, beliefs, styles of living, our experiences and expectations’ (Duszak,
 2002, p.1)
 Academic challenge.
 “We are all students together”.
 We express this through language (Montgomery, 2010),
 Language bonds but separates
 Without language we cannot belong (Duszak, 2002)
 Without language we cannot tell others of ourselves (Montgomery, 2010),
 Who we are remains hidden
 Without language we cannot learn of ourselves,

Of others,
Of ourselves with others
'Our sense of self is informed by those we feel we belong with
And those we don't
And how that makes us feel' (Duszak, 2002, p.2).
We are always in relation
There is always 'otherness' (Duszak, 2002, p.2)
Identities indeterminate, situational, dynamic, interactively constructed
(Duszak, 2002)
Through language we can belong
Us-them
We- they
Inclusion-exclusion
Communication across these divides
Demands shared 'understandings of the deeper,
Culturally specific,
Pragmatic meanings of language' (Montgomery, 2010, p.99).
Meanings negotiated in the third space (Montgomery, 2010)
Culture shifts around the individual at the centre
What they bring with them to this new space
Essential to intercultural communication (Montgomery, 2010)
'Us'/'them'
"We are all students together".
Does it matter that there are few or many?
Perhaps it does.
Where there are few integration is a matter of necessity but perhaps
Loneliness.
Large numbers flock together and are self-sustaining (Zhao et al., 2005)
"UK students don't like to be friendly
With anyone
But other UK students
Until now I haven't talked to any English.
English no.
They do not make you welcome.
Japanese, Chinese or Pakistani, not English.
They're already in groups,
They sit together and
They talk together".
"It's hard to merge the two groups together"
But if you rub together it's much better
"There's a lot of interaction on my course

So it's just natural, so you talk to them"
Where are you from? I am more than my place of birth (Montgomery, 2010)
National stereotypes divide
New place, new learning, new language, new sense of self (Montgomery,
2010; Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund, 2010)
The English language a prize,
"I came to learn"
The means by which better prospects are attained,
"To get a good job"
Entrance to a global community, independence, possibilities
"To travel"
Identity is in a state of flux;
An ever unfolding story (Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund, 2010).
'Telling (writing) a life story is therefore about constructing one's identity.
And the way we tell about our lives, to ourselves and to others, can be seen
as Important' (Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund, 2010, p.275). We construct
ourselves through our life stories. L2 learners construct themselves in new
places, cultures and communities (Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund, 2010). Here the
concept of a third cultural space sees language learners constructing a space
between cultures as they negotiate a place for themselves within the new
culture (Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund, 2010).

Our sense of self is informed by the social groups to which we feel we belong and how we
feel about either the inclusion or exclusion (Duszak, 2002). We therefore see ourselves in
relation to others and these categorisations create 'otherness' (Duszak, 2002, p.2). We may
see ourselves as members of many different groups based on our various social roles
(Duszak, 2002). 'As a result human social identities tend to be indeterminate, situational
rather than permanent, dynamic and interactively constructed' (Duszak, 2002, p.2-3). Social
psychology takes an interest in the boundaries between these groups whereas linguistics
focuses on the role that language plays in the formation of these groups (Duszak, 2002).
Much work has centred on shared codes of meaning and the notion of face (Duszak, 2002).

'For communication to be successful it is essential that speakers across cultures have the
same understandings of the deeper, culturally specific, pragmatic meanings of language'
(Montgomery, 2010, p.99). There is a sense in which these meanings are negotiated
between speakers and a new 'social reality' is created (Montgomery, 2010, p.99). This
notion of a negotiated social space describes how individuals transition between cultures

and language contexts 'and through interaction with others, a third culture or space develops' (Montgomery, 2010, p.99). Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund's (2010, p.274) study of second language learners (L2) draws on the theories of motivation, identity, 'socio-cultural aspects of learning' and 'the concept of the third place'. For Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund (2010) identity is in a state of flux; an ever unfolding story. 'Telling (writing) a life story is therefore about constructing one's identity. And the way we tell about our lives, to ourselves and to others, can be seen as important' (Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund, 2010, p.275). We construct ourselves through our life stories.

Two prominent approaches to the analysis of the role of language in identity formation exist within linguistics (Duszak, 2002). The first looks at 'levels of language structure' and the cues the speaker gives to define their belonging to a group (Duszak, 2002, p. 5). The second uses '*critical discourse analysis*' to identify 'the writers' 'position of an ingroup or an outgroup member' (Duszak, 2002, p.5). Duszak (2002, p.6) takes the position that language plays a significant role in identifying adherence to a social group however, argues that it may not 'necessarily [be] a core value underlying people's sense of belonging or non-belonging'. However, 'language has many resources to actualize the *us-them* distinction' (Duszak, 2002, p.6). The use of '*we* and *they*' conveys a sense of inclusion or exclusion and '*we* in particular enjoys a strong cultural salience across languages and contexts' (Duszak, 2002, p.6).

Language and the confidence in our ability to make ourselves known and understood are clearly hugely significant both to our sense of self and our ability to learn. Language competency is often seen to be the major influencing factor in student outcomes (Robertson, Line, Jones & Thomas, 2000; Ryan & Hellmundt, 2003; Ramburuth and Tani's, 2009). Montgomery (2010) also suggests that it is seen as instrumental in the development of cultural competency. Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund (2010, p.273) identify learning another language 'at university level as a process of identity formation'. Similarly Montgomery's findings reveal the value that students place on English language learning and their resulting perception of themselves as members of 'a global community' (Montgomery, 2010, p.101). Study in England then was seen as a means of improving English language skills but also as a way to achieve independence (Montgomery, 2010).

According to Montgomery (2010, p.36) 'Language is a medium through which others understand us and thus it is inextricably linked with who we are perceived to be'. Our sense of social alignment to others is based on a perception of shared 'values, beliefs, styles of living, our experiences and expectations' (Duszak, 2002, p.1). These are conveyed through a range of means however language is the most significant of these (Duszak, 2002; Montgomery, 2010). Language may also therefore be a significant barrier to belonging to a group, especially if that group speaks a different language (Duszak, 2002). It is sometimes difficult for second language speakers who lack competency to effectively express their sense of self (Montgomery, 2010). In Tian and Lowe's (2009) study students' sense of self within the academic context was negatively impacted on by lack of language competency and comprehension in the classroom; this was interpreted as a 'personal limitation' and resulted in 'a sense of exclusion' (Tian and Lowe's, 2009, p.665). The students took responsibility for their language skills and described this either in personal terms or in relation to themselves and their peers as a whole (Tian and Lowe's, 2009). In this sense Tian and Lowe (2009, p.665) suggest this illustrates the way in which within the UK HE culture 'the Chinese students are placed in subordinate positions, justified by an appeal to stereotypes that they themselves are willing to support'. This forces the students to assimilate without guidance or scaffolding in the process (Tian and Lowe's, 2009).

In Brown's (2009) study despite an acknowledgement of the need and the desire to mix in order to improve their language ability the students associated their own language with home and comfort in challenging circumstances (Brown, 2009). 'It seems that segregation was a tool of survival in a new culture that was widely perceived to be unforthcoming' (Brown, 2009, p.190). Although language competency can have an impact on student outcomes it is not working in isolation and other factors such as expected teaching strategies and learning styles are as significant (Ho et al., 2004).

Language competency, as indicated in the literature (Volet & Tan-Quigley, 1999; Robertson et al., 2000; Ryan & Hellmundt, 2003; Ramburuth and Tani's, 2009; Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund, 2010; Montgomery, 2010), is a significant issue and emerged as prominent in my study. Issues surrounding language ranged from students citing second language learning as a motivation for study in the UK to limited language competency been a motivation for staying within mono-cultural friendships groups and making other friendships difficult. Poor

language competency was seen as a barrier by the international students in my study to working with native English speakers; rejection because of limited language competence resulted in reluctance to reach out again to native English speakers for collaborative working relationships. It would appear that this initial perception of lack resulted in an overall challenge to confidence for the international students; both parties seemed to see a link between English language competencies and subject learning. This perception appeared to result in a negative relative self-perception; those with the language were perceived to be more intelligent. Li and Cheung both declared themselves as less clever than their UK peers. However, this appeared to be an initial reaction and changed due to a combination of the pressures of the course, a shared sense of struggle and a better understanding of the benefits and rules of collaborative working.

There were interesting conversations around languages the students knew; the Chinese students were impressed by the number the British students knew. They also discussed where they came from, belonged and wanted to live after university. The notion of having English competency and how that would benefit the students was discussed especially in terms of its global dominance. But also the sense that mandarin is growing in influence as a global language of business was discussed. There was definitely a sense that developing language skills would be beneficial to the future career prospects and the students' choices in the future whether that was in terms of a career or personally. Travel around the globe was mentioned as an option and English language competency was one thing that made that a possibility. There was also a certain kudos in having English language and travel experiences as one student felt it would make him better boyfriend material and said he wanted to take his girlfriend around the world with him!

Learning culture and identity

Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping and Todman (2008) describe an idea common in the literature that international students experience cultural disorientation when coming to the UK to study for the first time. The move to a new culture can result in a sense of loss of self and identity but also a process of change. Thus in acculturation theory identity is perceived in relation to a relative sense of identification with the host culture (Zhou et al., 2008). Social identity theory focuses on the impact of a sense of belonging to a community informed by self-esteem, notions of acceptance and diversity (Zhou et al., 2008). Zhou et al.'s (2008, p.

68) 'model of cultural adaptation' is informed by these underlying theoretical approaches, combined with cultural learning and coping strategies. Zhou et al. (2008, p.69) see 'cross-cultural transition as a significant life event that involves adaptive change. The major task facing individuals in cultural transition is the development of stress-coping strategies and culturally relevant social skills'. Gu et al. (2010, p.20) suggest that adapting to a new cultural environment inevitably is stressful especially in the early stages but that 'despite the challenges embedded in the academic and social conditions, most international students managed to change, adapt, develop and achieve'. This process is transformative and this sense of a changing identity is informed by and informs 'the growth of their maturity and interculturality' (Gu et al., 2010, p.20). It is also multifaceted involving developing language and academic competency and social skills (Gu et al., 2010).

Morita's (2009) study of an international doctoral student studying at a university in Canada focussed on socialization, recognising the impact that differences of language, culture and gender can have on that process. These differences are seen to be 'locally and interactionally' 'constructed' and to influence identity and role formation (Morita, 2009, p. 443). Morita (2009, p. 444) describes 'academic discourse socialization primarily as learning how to participate in a competent and appropriate manner in the discursive practices of a given academic community'. This concept of moving from one cultural space to another is evident here as Morita (2009, p. 445) describes a process by which international students 'creatively deal with various cultural and personal values as they cross cultural and linguistic boundaries'. The participant here 'struggle[s]' with the academic practices of the university and the particular research culture of the department in which he is placed (Morita, 2009, p. 450) and this struggle impacts on his negotiated identity within that community. According to Morita (2009, p. 458) '[i]t is therefore vital for academic communities and institutions to recognize individual students as active human agents with unique histories, aspirations, and resources, as well as to recognize themselves as having a critical role in shaping students' positionalities'. This ethos of a differentiated pedagogy is of course as important for UK as it is international students.

Cortazzi and Jin (1997, p.88) reject assimilation on the part of international students in favour of 'culture synergy' which they define as 'the mutual effort of both teachers and students to understand each other's academic cultures', suggesting that this could be a

mutually beneficial process for both visitor and host. Indeed Ryan and Louie (2007) suggest that this process provides the opportunity for host educational cultures to critically appraise their own practices. For Leask and Carroll (2011, p.657) this involves an internationalisation of the curriculum in a way that 'ensure[s] positive cross-cultural interaction and engagement occurs as a normal part of every student's university experience'.

Students' approaches to learning in their new educational environment

Students' approaches to learning in their new educational environment

Study abroad a dynamic process of academic socialisation

Combining cultural and academic identities (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Luzio-Lockett, 1998; Wong, 2007; Tubin and Lapidot, 2008).

All of law is subjective

I memorise and memorise and memorise.

Analysing the cases based on memorised knowledge

At the beginning spending time I forgot

So I memorise at the end

I write it over and over to imprint it on my mind

Studying becomes a hybrid of the new and old

What went before both a preparation and a barrier.

Using only set texts and lecture slides no longer enough

Finding information for themselves

Now necessary for success.

In school they teach you

But I have forgotten everything

Now they expect you to do a lot more yourself

I'm so nervous because the teacher can't give me the answer

We need the British teacher to tell us.

It is difficult to answer essay questions

I read the question and explain it, I have to translate it

Unhelpful suggestions

They refrain from asking for help in the future (Tian and Lowe, 2009).

Google it.

I never want to have him again.

'Their recognised position of inequality and marginalisation' (Tian and Lowe, 2009, p.666).

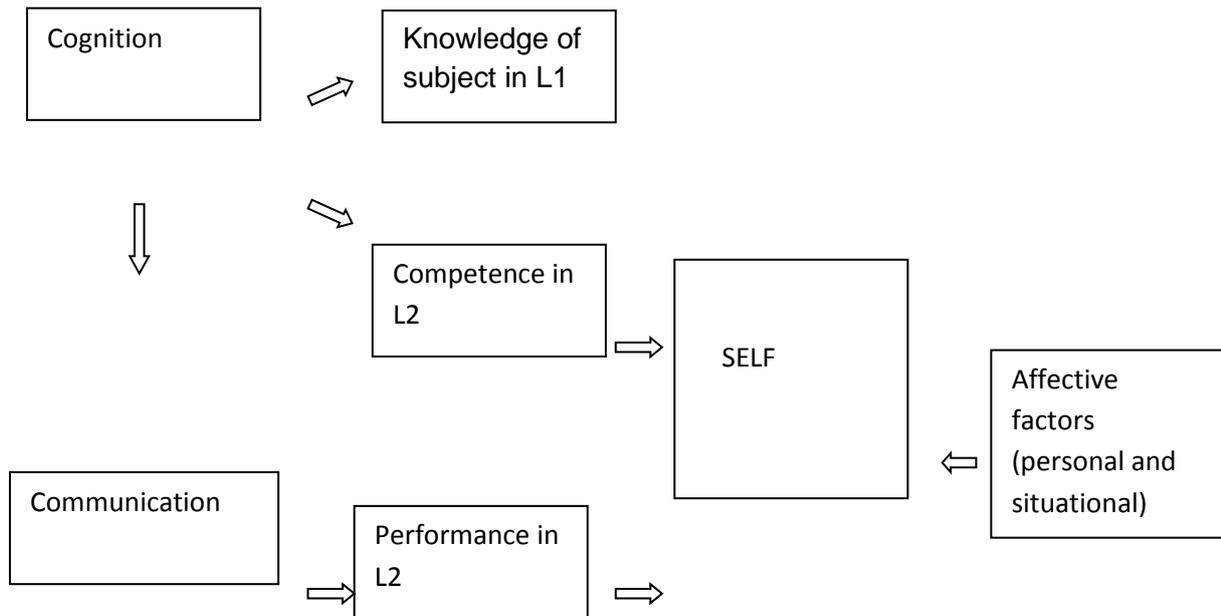
Or personality clashes?

Different expectations?

Luzio-Lockett (1998, p.209) suggests that when making the transition from one educational culture to another the student is required to adapt to 'the frames of reference of the host

country' and this necessitates a constriction of self within existing principles. Where students lack language competency and experience lower than expected academic success within the new educational culture, there is a negative impact on their sense of self and their satisfaction (Luzio-Lockett, 1998). Luzio-Lockett (1998, p.210) describes this process in a model which she calls the 'squeezing effect':

Fig 1: The squeezing effect Note: L1 = first language, L2 = second/foreign language



(Luzio-Lockett, 1998, p.210).

This model is revealing in terms of the processes it indicates which impact on the students' confidence in their abilities and the challenges they face when developing new learning strategies outside of their previous learning experience.

Similarly Tubin and Lapidot (2008, p.205) argue that '[b]y undergoing part of their academic socialization in a university abroad, international students are faced with the task of combining their taken-for-granted national identity with their newly obtained professional academic identity'. A process of acculturation is achieved through 'intertwining', 'ordering' and 'buffering' (Tubin and Lapidot, 2008, p. 212). The global and local can be intertwined where there is a synergy between them; ordering and buffering are symptoms of divergence (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Wong (2007, p.78) describes this process in personal terms and now considers himself to have 'two cultural personas' although this has been a source of frustration to him as often these two cultures do not reside easily within him. Both these

theories contribute to an understanding of how the participants in my study negotiate their new educational context.

In Tian and Lowe's (2009) study, their Chinese participants suggested that some blame be apportioned to their teachers for their difficulties in comprehension in the classroom. However, they were reluctant to make their complaints heard due to a lack of confidence in their ability to fully or effectively express their concern (Tian and Lowe, 2009). This led to further distancing in their relationship with their lecturers and a tendency to turn to their Chinese peers for support; 'as a voluntary withdrawal from their recognised position of inequality and marginalisation' (Tian and Lowe, 2009, p.666).

What is interesting about the students' working relationships in my study is that they were not just about sharing subject knowledge they were, perhaps even more so, about sharing ways of coming to know. The students shared study strategies and ideas about how to write and revise and think and learn. Their strategies for learning became refined through collaboration and constructive discourse. What works and does not work was theoretically and actively compared in discussion and study groups. Learning from one another was therefore about developing a successful practical process that could be shared. Efficiency was key to this as it was desired in the face of the work load. Old methods were rejected as time consuming or for not providing the desired result; a high grade. In second year the students still talked of learning from the tutors, by third year they talked mainly of learning independently or from each other. They also talked in second year of collaboration as plagiarism and were fearful that if they worked together they would be accused of cheating in some way. This notion was not mentioned again and so it would seem that the academically acceptable boundaries of working relationships had been successfully negotiated also.

The perceived difference between the students also narrowed through a gradual process. In second year difference was perceived and marked by prior experience, culture and language. The direct entrant students in particular perceived their different prior educational experience as significant in terms of their current learning process. The fact that they had not studied the same curriculum to the same standard, by their own assessment, was perceived by them as a hindrance to their current success. The continuing students also

saw their prior studies as important and foundational and so unwittingly reinforced this perception in their direct entrant peers. By their third year these differences were gone and there was a perception of a more equal plane on which each student was assessed by their own personal abilities.

National stereotypes

Ho et al. (2004) detail the differences between collectivist and individualist cultures as a means of appreciating the cultural influences that may affect East Asian students' approaches to learning. As Chinese students make up the 'largest national group of international students in the UK' and the largest national group within this study, an awareness of their educational culture would seem important (Tian and Lowe, 2009, p.663). Certainly Ramburuth and Tani's (2009) review of the literature reveals conflict between the expectations of collectivist and individualistic cultures that can result in misunderstandings that impact on the international students' ability to succeed exacerbated by lack of prior knowledge of expectations and practices. However, it is important to acknowledge that such generalised views of a culture's educational practices are very often simplifications that fail to appreciate the complexities that exist and, although they may raise a general awareness, need to be approached with caution.

The sense of self in Asian society is influenced by relationships which are not fixed (Ho et al., 2004). Education is desirable both personally and in terms of how the educated person can help others (Ho et al., 2004). It is also accepted that it requires effort on the part of the learner in order for that person to achieve their best (Ho et al., 2004). Authority is accepted and those in authority are not questioned, further, students would not want to be seen to get something wrong or to disrupt the dynamics in the classroom by speaking out without first been asked to do so by the teacher (Ho et al., 2004).

Learning is generally delivered differently within each culture and the expectations of classroom behaviour differ also (Ho et al., 2004). Teaching is more likely to be teacher-centred than student-centred in collectivist societies with a focus on exams and memorisation rather than the social construction of knowledge (Ho et al., 2004). In the West educators value classroom discussion and questioning as a means to socially construct knowledge and so reluctance to speak in class can be misinterpreted (Ho et al., 2004).

Further Chinese students see good teaching as directive and feel that, where teachers attempt to transfer the responsibility for acquiring knowledge on to the student in a more student-centred teaching environment, they are neglecting their duties as teachers (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996).

However, Ho et al. (2004, p.18) warn that 'although a dominant learning style is likely to be prominent in a particular culture, caution must be taken not to over-generalise because individuals differ within a culture'. Much literature is unhelpful when it ascribes learning styles to whole nation populations without consideration of the variation of practice which exists (Ryan and Louie, 2007). Indeed as Montgomery (2010, p.13) argues '[n]ations incorporate a wide range of cultural beliefs and linguistic variations, and this means that treating a nation as one culture is misleading and can promote prejudice and from there inequality'. According to Trahar (2011, p.17) we 'fail to recognise that international students bring distinctive learning skills. Our own teaching and learning practices are rarely subjected to such critical scrutiny. We seldom question, for example, the validity of taking a 'critical approach' to study'. Further to this, 'the striving for self-actualisation and learning autonomy that pervades higher education discourse in the UK context – and in many other 'western' contexts – ...[is] based on particular philosophies that favour and privilege individual development' (Trahar, 2011, p.24). Smith (2006, p.111) concurs describing criticality as 'a socially constructed element of the Western knowledge tradition' agreeing with Nichols (2003, p.136) who argues that it has 'become a dividing practice in the internationalised university'. This Nichols (2003, p.174) argues discourages 'international students' engagement and reproduce[s] colonialist stereotypes'.

East Asian learners are often described as adopting memorisation techniques (Nield, 2007) and are commonly criticised as being 'unable to participate in classroom discussion, overly respectful of the teacher, and academically unprepared for studying in [Western] countries... where critical thinking and inquiry are a directive of education' (Ho et al., 2004, p. 18). Montgomery (2010) questions the criticisms of rote learning and suggests that there may be a link between memorisation techniques and deep learning. She goes on to argue that there is lack of clarity and consensus in UK HE as to what academics mean by critical thinking and suggests that its practice is not limited to the West (Montgomery, 2010). Indeed for the Chinese learner memorisation is a part of the learning process which is

conducted in conjunction with efforts to make sense of the knowledge (Nield, 2007). Marton, Watkins and Tang (1997) suggest that this is meaningful memorisation resulting in understanding. Studies have also shown however that it is more common for students to use both surface and deep learning methods rather than to adopt just one approach (Ho et al., 2004). This was true for both the UK and international students in my study and is explored in more detail later in this section (page 137).

Communities of Practice

Social networks

Students transfer in a large, established group
There is little need for intercultural interaction
The support network can be relied upon (Quan et al., 2013)
We took the same route together
Our English not good, it is hard to make friends
So we speak Chinese
An exchange of place, it's just geography.
But now it's very close compared to last year
Because you are in a struggle together
'We align ourselves with others' (Duszak, 2002, p.1)
And the more you can help each other
The more you can get through it.
So it is a shared challenge,
'Emotional engagement through storytelling' (Schapiro et al., 2012, p.357)
The teachers cast as the enemies
To get through we are all students together
A dialogic communication group
Sharing stories, experiences and learning from one another (Schapiro et al., 2012).

Conceptual framework

What do we say?
What do we learn from what we say?
About ourselves and others
Ourselves with others
A place in a landscape
An island
How is that learning shared?
Prior skill sets
Individual
Skills

Knowledge
Experience
Prior learning contexts
Relational
New skill sets
Social learning
'We are all students together'

Words

Spoken, shared
Meaning, mis-
Understanding, un-
Practiced community of
Practice, transitory,
Peripheral, outward bound
Supporting individual attainment
Together.

Wenger and Snyder (2000, p.139) define communities of practice (CofP) as 'groups of people informally bound together by shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise'. They (2000, p. 140) maintain that 'people in communities of practice share their experiences and knowledge in free-flowing, creative ways that foster new approaches to problems'. However, the 'organic, spontaneous, and informal nature of communities of practice makes them resistant to supervision and interference' (Wenger and Snyder, 2000, p.140). Therefore, fostering CofP is a difficult process and not automatically achieved simply by bringing like-minded people together. Learning communities are distinct from CofP in that they are 'intentionally develop[ed]' (Jessup-Anger, 2015, p.17). The decision to join a CofP is a mutual one whereby individuals sense their potential alignment to a group and the existing members 'also operate on a gut sense of the prospective member's appropriateness for the group' (Wenger and Snyder, 2000, p.142). An alignment to a CofP is based on a common interest, goal and shared practice. Knowledge is managed through a combination of three elements: '[d]omain provides a common focus; community builds relationships that enable collective learning; and practice anchors the learning in what people do' (Wenger, 2004, p.3).

For Wenger (2000) CofP are bound up with identity and trajectories. If we imagine a future for ourselves, alignment with a CofP becomes part of the process of 'doing what it takes to get there' (Wenger, 2000, p.241). Trajectories take us in various directions:

Inbound trajectories invite newcomers into full membership in a community. Peripheral trajectories allow a person to interact with the community without making a commitment to becoming a full member. Outbound trajectories, such as the ones offered by schools, point to forms of participation outside the current communities (Wenger, 2000, p.241).

However, when on these trajectories we inevitably 'cross boundaries' between multimembership of CofP, negotiating challenges to identity, which 'extends in space and ... is neither unitary nor fragmented ... at once one and multiple' (Wenger, 2000, p.242). This identity work 'is a source of personal growth. It is also a source of social cohesion ... [which] reweaves the social fabric of our learning systems' (Wenger, 2000, p.242). 'We are not born with complex identities. We become multiplied through our trajectory across the landscape' (Kubiak et al., 2015, p.79).

Anderson and McCune (2013, p. 284) provide a useful critique of Wenger's CofP, whilst acknowledging its value as a 'lens through which to view learning and teaching in Higher Education' they argue that the undergraduate experience is distinct from that of other learning communities. So, although Wenger sees individuals as belonging to multiple CofP, their belonging is based on an identification with a community within which they will remain and the acquisition of knowledge and practice that belongs to that community (Anderson and McCune, 2013). Students however, are 'placed in a time-limited manner within the same learning community but with multiple possible future trajectories which may not yet be clearly imagined by the learner' (Anderson and McCune, 2013, p.293). The situation is further complicated by the critical stance students are required to take in relation to knowledge, thus 'entry into disciplinary practices' is not 'a unidirectional process of enculturation' (Anderson and McCune, 2013, p.292). Further, higher education is a learning community which 'customarily focus[es] on abstract and theoretical concepts' and although Wenger's theory 'can be seen to foreground the negotiation of meaning within communities of practice' this according to Anderson and McCune (2013, p.290) is based on 'a view of

communication where language is treated as a fairly transparent medium of exchange'. The negotiation of meaning with theoretical and critical discourse is not about the acquisition of fixed meanings but rather, it necessitates the 'creation of transitional spaces and hybrid discourses that allow for 'movement and change'' (Anderson and McCune, 2013, p.292). Thus Anderson and McCune (2013, p. 293) see 'the distinctive nature of higher education learning communities as spaces of the in-between'.

An emphasis on the 'in-betweenness' of meaning can be seen to focus attention on the need to *create* sufficient common reference from different initial experiences, knowledge and perspectives; the possibility of such an exercise; but also the limits on achieving common reference in a world of partial connections (Anderson and McCune, 2013, p.293).

This links to another common criticism of Wenger's theory in that it takes little account of the role of power within communities (Anderson and McCune, 2013). This is pertinent for higher education in terms of the ownership of knowledge and knowledge creation and the perceived position of power of the lecturer in relation to the student (Anderson and McCune, 2013). But is also significant in terms of the interactions between various groups of students on international campuses where, 'there is a clear need to act to reduce the likelihood that particular groups of students are "othered"' (Anderson and McCune, 2013, p.293). Thus Anderson and McCune (2013) suggest that CofP can be usefully applied as a framework for understanding how communities learn within higher education, but that their distinct nature necessitates a focus on the spaces in-between knowledge, practice and communication.

Wenger-Trayner, Fenton-O'Creevy, Hutchinson, Kubiak and Wenger-Trayner's (eds) (2015) recent text *Learning in Landscapes of Practice*, although explicitly focused on practice-based learning, moves very much closer to Anderson and McCune's (2013) in-betweenness when it suggests that within learning landscapes there are always boundaries. These spaces are the in-between places where knowledge, practice and competence are negotiated and power relations are political (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Thus:

boundaries are places of potential misunderstanding and confusion arising from different regimes of competence, commitments, values, repertoires, and

perspectives. In this sense, practices are like mini-cultures. Even common words and objects are not guaranteed to have continuity of meaning across a boundary (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p.17).

This notion of boundaries of practice seems particularly applicable to students in transition negotiating academic practice differences between academic cultures. It is also relevant to an understanding of the experience of students studying courses with a vocational focus, such as the accountancy students in my research, who were studying at the boundary of academia and theoretical practice, although it must be acknowledged, as Anderson and McCune (2013) point out, that student trajectories are by no means fixed or known to them, even if their subject choice would appear to suggest otherwise. In Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's (2015) conception the undergraduate student experience becomes a moment on a 'trajectory through a social landscape' which shapes experience and identity.

In another chapter within this text Fenton-O'Creedy, Brigham, Jones and Smith (2015) look more closely at the notion of trajectories and students working at the boundary of theory and practice. In Wenger's original concept, members of a CofP had a trajectory from periphery to centre as, via a process of apprenticeship, the learner moved from a novice to expert status within the community, both in relation to the subject and the other members. However, in a landscape of practice 'not all participants in communities of practice understand their journeys as leading to full participation; some are just visiting. This is often true for students at university, who are passing through academic communities of practice and understand that their trajectories will carry them outside of these communities again' (Fenton-O'Creedy et al., 2015, p.44). The significant distinction between visitors and those on an inward trajectory is the nature and level of their engagement with that community of practice; the aim is 'accommodation to the practices of that community' not 'assimilation within the community' (Fenton-O'Creedy et al., 2015, p.45). Where there is a lower level of engagement the student may be little changed by their experience (Fenton-O'Creedy et al., 2015). '[A] core challenge of identity work is the need to maintain a continuous sense of self in the face of threats to identity across landscapes and over time' (Fenton-O'Creedy et al., 2015, p.45).

The examples Fenton-O’Creevy et al. (2015) give are students on p/t courses with a strong vocational context; nursing students and managers on an MBA. For these students there is a real and immediate sense in which they are working at the boundaries of the workplace and academia. Their trajectory in both cases is to full participation in the profession and their engagement with academia is temporary. The students in my study were on a vocational course and so their imagined trajectory was toward the accountancy profession but they were learning about it theoretically within the community of practice of academics. They were crossing boundaries that were imaginary in that they had to project what they were learning now on to a future context of practice. They were asked to do so explicitly when completing assignments which were developed to have a real world context but assessed academically according to that community of practice. These were hybrid tasks at the borders of practices. There were other boundaries at which these students were working when moving from modules to modules for instance, accounting, accountancy, law, but also school, college, first year, third year and for the international students, differing academic practice experienced in their home countries. Study skills as a discrete provision in HE took a deficit view of student writing problems, whereas the ‘academic literacies approach’... ‘views problems with student writing as issues at the level of ways of knowing and identities rather than skills or socialisation’ (Fenton-O’Creevy et al., 2015, p.49). Ways of knowing are therefore genre and discipline specific and students are often required to change their practices as they move from module to module (Fenton-O’Creevy et al., 2015). For the ‘sojourner, participation is still provisional and temporary but there is a deeper commitment to the meaning of academic practices and to their implications’ (Fenton-O’Creevy et al., 2015, p.46). However, when one of my participants, Mei, said there was no difference between her prior and new learning context, ‘only geography’ she was avoiding an inward trajectory that would mean deeper engagement with her new learning context and its community of practice, and a challenge to her identity as student.

Moving across boundaries of practice means ‘negotiating challenges to identity’ this is often done, and was the case for my participants, with ‘support from peers’ (Fenton-O’Creevy et al., 2015, p.56). For my participants this was done in a very strategic way. They were a group of co-operative, co-supportive individuals. Although, they were not working towards a common goal, as even when working on group projects their ultimate aim was their

individual degree classification, there was an element of shared interest and an alignment with one another and the practices they shared. When working on group projects there was however, an element of competition, as individual marks were awarded for group work. Controversy around individual contribution developed. Time spent helping others was sometimes resented, as were those who did not contribute equally. This was seen as a life lesson which would be valuable later outside academia in the world of work, emphasising the transitory nature of the students' engagement with the academic CofP, but also their outward trajectory. They imagined themselves in another CofP where they would also need to manage working relationships. Use of peers was strategic and allied to the goal of personal success. This was however, mutually beneficial. But not everyone put something back. Helping someone else did not always help the individual, and on their outward trajectory to the world of work they would be in competition with one another when securing employment. Where their time at university sat in their individual landscape of social learning varied from individual to individual and was influenced by their sense of self as a student, as a future accountant and their alignment to each other and practice.

The reality of a landscape of practice is multimembership and the necessity to 'modulate [our] identification' with various CofP through differing levels of 'engagement, imagination and alignment' (Kubiak et al., 2015, p.64-65). This may lead to an engagement with a CofP with which an individual feels incongruent as the practices do not fit with their previous experience (Kubiak et al., 2015). This may be relevant for students moving from one context of education to another. Practices used for learning in school may differ significantly to those practiced in HE and similarly educational practices across cultural boundaries may differ. Strategies that worked in one context may need to be changed and this process may well be challenging leading to a period of 'unaligned engagement' (Kubiak et al., 2015, p.65).

The direct entrant students in my study occupied a different position to that of their continuing peers, as although they had studied the subject in another learning context they had not had the same experience. Nadia was angry when she recounted a tutor's surprise that as students on the second year they were asking questions to which he evidently expected them to know the answer. When she asked for direction as a direct entrant who had not previously experienced the assessment methods used in UK HE, she was 'claiming a

legitimate peripheral role that would allow [her] to learn' (Fenton-O'Ceavy et al., 2015, p.56).

Within the earlier conception of CofP the notion of a master-apprentice framework for learning does not seem to automatically fit the CofP that developed among my participants. Any member of the group could take on the role of expert depending on the task and the relative skills and experiences of the community members. However, more often than not it was a community of equals learning together in a more collaborative relationship. There were no experts because they were all on the periphery of participation and in terms of academic practice sojourners not on an inward trajectory, and yet it worked as a community of practice of novices. There is a link here to Magolda's (1992) ideas of maturation and changing positioning in relation to the authority of knowledge and its creation. As well as Frambach et al.'s (2012) and Butcher and Sumner's (2011) conception of the novice status of students in relation to their chosen subject and the impact that has on the ability to develop criticality. If independence comes with a developing sense of confidence both in subject knowledge and skills then these participants developed this together in a supportive and collaborative community of practice.

A critique of the internationalisation of HE highlights that whereas there are potential benefits to be gained from increased intercultural awareness and valuing of diversity, a potential danger is that western centric curricula and pedagogical practices can instead erode diversity (Knight, 2013). The way in which universities approach internationalisation and the strategies they employ impact this process. Rather than taking a recruitment driven approach HEIs should focus on a re-evaluation of practice and policy that would result in a 'transformative internationalisation' (Tian and Lowe, 2009, p.662). However, we rarely subject our own teaching and learning practices to such critical scrutiny (Trahar, 2011).

Differences in educational cultural practices and prior learning experience can create tensions. The students' experiences in my research have highlighted tensions that often exist around expectations of pedagogical practice. The withdrawal of specific direction with the expectation that students will develop more self-directing practices may well create anxiety as students face the challenges of developing skills and confidence in new subject areas and educational cultural contexts. This tension between encouraging students to think for themselves and their novice status in the subject is not the exclusive domain of

international students but is shared by the UK student experience. Both groups express a need to be given explicit direction in the early stages of year two, but as their relationship to knowledge develops, this changes. They change their perceptions about criticality and the building of academic argument and knowledge, perceiving a need to look for differing perspectives, move away from a reliance on tutor provided materials towards wider reading, and they develop more autonomous study strategies.

In the early stages of year two the students' discussions reveal confusion about the differences between collusion and collaboration. There is a perception that they will be accused of plagiarism if they work together. Cortazzi and Jin's (1996) study suggests that this confusion arises from western teachers' misunderstanding of the collectivist cultures which encourage cooperation. The students in my study appear fearful that any collaboration on their part will be misinterpreted in this way and result in accusations of plagiarism. Discussions with their UK peers and the sharing of practice in supportive CofP enable the students in my study to resolve this confusion and find ways to work effectively together. The students did not have a clear understanding of plagiarism and collusion in UK HE terms; clearly a responsibility of the host institution is to provide this clarity but also to evaluate how we do this. This lack of clear working definitions and practices caused confusion and anxiety and created temporary barriers to establishing supportive working practices.

There is also a suggestion that CofP theory as an explanation of knowledge sharing has a closer relevance to collectivist rather than individualistic cultures and therefore may advantage those students from traditionally collectivist cultures (Kerno, 2008). Although, studies on CofP development within organisations and groups outside of western countries remain rare those that exist suggest CofP do develop naturally and organically in these contexts (Zhang and Watts, 2008; Hasmath and Hsu, 2016).

Of course taking advantage of communities of practice is not the whole story as notions of power and their influence depend on the terms of engagement. Critiques of CoP theory as a knowledge transfer practice suggest that issues surrounding power are largely overlooked, where the relative status of expert and apprentice potentially means that new comers are subordinated (Anderson and McCune, 2013). This would appear to have particular

pertinence to the experience of international students where there is the potential to be subordinated to the perceived greater knowledge and experience of UK students, particularly where second language use creates a disadvantage. However, Wenger et al's (2015) more recent conception of communities within landscapes of learning means that multi-membership students can be both expert and novice within different working groups depending on the particular focus of that group at any given time. There is a common acknowledgement within the student stories that the international students are experts in some areas and the UK students in others and so expert and apprentice is a shifting aspect of identity formation within a wider landscape of multiple CofPs.

The internationalisation of UK HE, to be a truly transformative process, calls for the very kind of critical scrutiny of our practices that Trahar (2011) argues has largely been missing. Ryan and Tilbury (2013, p.5) suggest a re-evaluation of UK HE practices with an aim to 'decolonising education'. This they suggest 'is concerned with deconstructing dominant pedagogical frames which promote singular worldviews to extend the inter-cultural understanding and experiences of students, plus their ability to think and work using globally-sensitive frames and methods' (Ryan and Tilbury, 2013, p. 20). In practice such an endeavour includes not just developing the curriculum so that it is less western-centric but also enabling staff and students to develop inter-cultural competency (Ryan and Tilbury, 2013). This, it is suggested, 'means creating more inclusive learning environments and encouraging the kind of informal learning that takes place through cross-cultural socialising and co-curricular activities' (Ryan and Tilbury, 2013, p.20).

Meng (2016, p. 258) suggests that one such way in which western HE (Australia is the particular example used) can foster inclusivity is by recognising 'research education as a two-way, reciprocal process of transnational knowledge exchange through intellectual engagement'. Meng (2016, p.260) suggests that the 'intellectual knowledge of international students could be considered as alternative resources' which 'could contribute to the internationalisation of Western higher education'. This Meng (2016) argues would be to recognise such alternative ways of knowing as equal contributions to knowledge creation. This means adopting 'a more cautious and critical attitude towards the adoption of Western theories and concepts' and valuing 'local and indigenous philosophies, epistemologies and histories' (Meng, 2016, p. 261). This is not without its difficulties the first being the necessity

for increased levels of awareness and understanding and the development of 'pedagogical strategies ...to make such resources comprehensible and acceptable to a Western audience' (Meng, 2016, p.261).

Meng's (2016) arguments take us into the territory of Southern Theory and what that might mean for global universities. Connell (2017) argues that the current reality is an unequal division of labour between North (metropole) and South (periphery).

'The role of the periphery is first to supply data, and later to apply knowledge in the form of technology and method. The role of the metropole, as well as producing data, is to collate and process data, producing theory (including methodology), and developing applications that are later exported to the periphery' (Connell, 2017, p.6).

The consequences of this division for academics is that publishing in metropole journals is highly desirable but to do so means 'one must write in metropolitan genres, cite metropolitan literature, become part of a metropolitan discourse. For a social scientist, this means either describing one's own society as if it were the metropole, suppressing its specific history; or describing it in the mode of comparison, placing its specificity within metropolitan frameworks'(Connell, 2017, p.8).

For Connell (2017. p.11) the solution centres on curriculum reform, which, she argues, goes far beyond the 'insertion of a little new content into a metropole-dominated curriculum' to a 'principle of curricular justice'. Such a curriculum she argues should be built on 'the central experiences of colonization' (p.11) and involves a re-evaluation of 'the relationship of the university as an institution to the different groups in colonial and postcolonial society' which has typically provided higher education for the 'elite' (p.12).

'The tasks of any substantial movement for reform include re-making curricula in Northern as well as Southern universities, developing new forms of practical connection among intellectual workers, and finding ways of funding transnational intellectual work that do not carry Northern agenda-setting with them. The ascendancy of neoliberal regimes in the last generation makes this

terrain harder to work on – at the same time, multiple possibilities for change now exist' (Connell, 2017.p13).

Direct entrants

Direct entrant student experience

Direct entrant students face distinct challenges

To that of their continuing counterparts (Barron and D'Annunzio-Greene, 2009).

Breaking into tight circles

Negotiating an unfamiliar learning-scape (Barron and D'Annunzio-Greene, 2009).

Auditing in Chinese

Accounting in English

British company law

We have not studied it before

A Saudi accounting diploma

But the standards are different.

Be specific when you ask,

But they talk general.

They can't help you,

No one helps me.

When I need them,

No one helps me.

"Are you students on second year?

Are you serious?"

Okay we don't have that much language

But why do they not respect the students on direct entry?

Feeder institutions: two by two

Learning at the British College in China is similar to here.

Almost similar to here.

Our teachers were from America, UK and Canada

Similar to the teachers here,

But the education style more like China

We prepared exams.

We copied the answer.

Knowing absolutely

Knowledge absolute (Magolda, 1992)

Students from high school

Cannot fit into university life very quickly.

So these teachers made plans for the Chinese students

They built a bridge from high school to the UK.
But students were not independent in their study.
They practised, practised, practised to improve our language
Thirty classes a week
Then transferred us to the UK
Where it is freer.
Where we need to do more self-study.
So I feel I have a new realisation,
A recognition about university life;
There should be a link.
Give students some burdens
Give them some direction.
A bridge from transitional knowing
To independent knowing (Magolda, 1992)
Because it was harder than I thought it was going to be.

The literature focusing on the experiences of direct entrant (DE) students appears to be scant. Where studies do consider this progression path they tend to look at the experiences of UK students moving from FE to HE to do top-up degrees or as a direct progression from Higher National Diploma (HND) study (Tait and Godfrey, 2001; Christie et al., 2013). There appear to be few studies considering the experiences of international students entering UK universities into the second or third year after study in universities in their home countries and those that do tend to focus on the early transition phase of their studies (Barron and D'Annunzio-Green, 2009; Quan et al., 2013). This route into UK HE is becoming increasingly popular as UK universities seek to grow international student recruitment through articulation agreements with partner institutions overseas. The experiences of these students are distinct from those of their progressing UK peers, in particular the lack of orientation to HE practices that the DE student experiences and the short time within which they are required to adjust can be very demanding (Barron and D'Annunzio-Green, 2009). Barron and D'Annunzio-Greene (2009, p.12) argue that the challenge of simultaneously trying to fit in to an established cohort whilst also acquiring new learning and assessment strategies can 'result in loss of confidence, loss of self-esteem and ultimately in attrition from the programme'.

Quan et al.'s (2013, p.416) study highlights a perception amongst DE students that they have missed out on the learning of their continuing peers and this results in 'less self-confidence'. For international students this is exacerbated by the challenges of culture shock, which arise from travel to a new place and 'academic shock' (Quan et al., 2013, p.416), which results from encountering differing academic practices and difficulties surrounding English Language competency. However, whereas in previous studies establishing social relationships has been highlighted as an issue for DE students resulting in isolation, with international students being particularly at risk (Barron and D'Annunzio-Greene, 2009), Quan et al. (2013) argue that for the Chinese students in their study, who transferred as an established group, there was already a well-formed social network of support. Quan et al. (2013) point out, however, that where these established mono-cultural networks exist there is little need to look beyond them, resulting in limited inter-cultural interaction and a lost opportunity for multicultural learning experiences.

Quan et al. (2013, p.423) argue that 'lack of 'British learning experience' leads to perceived learning deficit and significantly affects international direct-entry students' transition. They (2009) call for collaborative curriculum development and delivery of preparatory courses in China by UK HE experienced staff prior to joining UK HE courses. This is interesting as the majority of the Chinese students in my study transferred from a study programme delivered in China where they were following a collaborative curriculum and had been taught by UK staff.

Social networks for learning were of particular pertinence to the experience of direct entrant students in my study. Barriers to integration existed in their case as they entered into a pre-existing cohort of students who had progressed from year one where friendships and support networks were established. Breaking into these networks was difficult (Barron and D'Annunzio-Greene, 2009). The participants in my study reported limited interaction with their UK peers in the initial stages of the course and cited both lack of confidence in their language skills, and also the intimidation they felt when trying to negotiate friendships where strong social ties already existed, as barriers. The Chinese students transferred in a large, already established cohort and so they too already had friendships and support networks. There was therefore, initially at least, limited motivation to look elsewhere for these social and educational needs to be met (Quan et al., 2013). However, it would seem

that as the Saudi students, who formed a much smaller cohort, had similar problems making UK friends, the number of students forming one particular group therefore was not the only influencing factor, unless one considers that it was the UK friendship groups (as the largest group) that were self-sustaining and it was them who did not need to look elsewhere for support and so perhaps what hindered integration was the lack of engagement of UK students.

The direct entrant students in my study highlighted differences in teaching and assessment style between their prior experience and the UK, but also in their prior experience of the subject content of the course they were now experiencing. Although the students had all studied similar subjects in preparation for year two there had been contextual differences; British law differs significantly from that of Saudi Arabia or China for example, but so too does Accounting Theory. Hasan and Rashid often referred back to the learning that took place during their first year and saw the second year as a continuation and development in complexity of that learning.

From listening to the audios I am getting the impression of how much the course content and assignments are UK centric and disadvantage non-native speakers. For example the company law which is UK law and the video assignment where students watch a video in class and then write a report. There is a clear need for course designers to take into consideration the international perspective. Internationalisation of the curriculum is needed where the previous experiences of international students can be integrated and valued and all students whether international or UK can benefit from an international educational experience.

There was some discussion between Mei and Ai about whether what they experienced in their Chinese feeder institution was a western or Chinese education. However, Huan was very clear that he was not properly prepared. Their tutors were from the UK and USA and teaching in China and yet, he believed, their experience was not a complete preparation. He regarded his experience in China as all practise without reflection and referred to the expectation that in the UK he would adopt a more critical approach to his studies. However, the UK students took until their third year to appreciate the need to think, read and write critically and what that meant in practice. There is perhaps a need for close cooperation and

a need to better prepare students as Quan et al. (2013) suggest, but it seems that the process of developing criticality and independence in learning is one of developing maturity and it is a personal, experiential process (this is discussed in more detail later in this chapter, page 131).

The direct entrants studied the same subject before coming to the UK, they therefore had the subject knowledge but perhaps in some senses this different experience, although very close in terms of subject matter, ironically, felt further away for not having been exactly the same. This makes me think of Mei however, who said the learning was not different in the UK it was only the place that had changed. It also brings to mind Li who when prompted 'you've done this before right?' was then able to access her prior learning and transfer the experience. But she needed this prompt. Also Mei and Ai both suggested using prior knowledge, an essay they were graded highly on, in an assessment where the relevance was not direct and so would be an inappropriate use of prior learning. What took place in order to facilitate the realisation that they had the prior knowledge and usable skills and experience and where that was relevant, is a significant question I interrogate further later in this thesis (see Development of transformative study methods, page 138).

The direct entrant students' sense of their differentiated prior experience resulted for Nadia and Hakim, in particular, in anger, and for the others in a sense that they had been left behind as they had not studied some of the subjects before. The sense that they had missed learning that their peers gained in first year resulted in resentment that they were expected to know. There appeared to be a resulting inability to access and transfer knowledge and skills appropriately. The barrier appeared to result from their perception that what they had studied before was not exactly the same and so was perceived to be not useful. There was a sense that they needed permission to use prior knowledge and that they had difficulties in evaluating where their prior learning was relevant. The consequent disorientation had a freezing effect on learning and resulted in a reliance on the tutor for direction and knowledge acquisition. The need to be taught and told exactly what to do was not limited to the direct entrant students, but directly related to levels of understanding of the subject and assessment task requirements, and so all students experienced difficulties here depending on the subject and how the assessment was framed. Therefore, lack of understanding of assessment requirements was not limited to certain cultural groups and continued to be

experienced into third year and so was not only a symptom of novice status in a subject. All students seemed to suggest that it was a lack of understanding of what tutors expected of them that most frequently resulted in lower attainment. The tension seemed to exist between reliance on directed learning, the students' perception of knowledge, and the tutors' pedagogical move to facilitation of independent learning. These were dynamic, interdependent processes and where they inevitably did not move entirely in synchronicity fault lines appeared.

Second year experience

The second year into third year experience

The second year 'even more challenging' than the first

When students find themselves alone,

Support withdrawn (Gahagan and Hunter, 2006).

We were given everything,

All the tools we needed.

This year is different to the first.

Left to stand alone but 'ill prepared' (Thompson et al., 2013, p.15).

I can't just live off the slides, spoon fed.

'Developing competence,

Moving through autonomy toward interdependence,

Establishing identity,

Developing purpose' (Tobolowsky, 2008, p.61).

Motivation dips (Thompson et al., 2013)

I wish I had the discipline to study more

Sometimes my mind's elsewhere,

I can't concentrate alone,

But it helps to share.

'Performance' only goals

Everyone wants to make the grade

The 'pressure and anxiety' increases (Thompson et al., 2013, p.15).

The way you work changes,

The way you revise.

First simpler than second.

Second an extension.

Lecture notes are not enough

You learn things, you add a bit more.

In first year you don't concentrate,

You can't miss lectures really but people do.

Second year is hard, it is different,

But third year you do every single piece of work for every single tutorial,
You have to go to lectures,
There won't be time later to understand that thing
Because there will be something else after that.
But when I look at a question now
I know how to do it,
I know how to start from the beginning.
You read, you read, you read.
You analyse.
You read, you read, you read.
You criticise.
Different types of books.
Different points of view.
You hit the ground running
They could have told us this is what it would be like.
But where to go next? (Schaller, 2005; Gahagan and Hunter, 2006;
Tobolowsky, 2008).
I don't know. I'm confused.
I don't know what I'm going to do.
Maybe go abroad, teach for a bit,
I think you can put something back.

There appear to be few studies that concentrate on the second year of HE. Much of the literature comes from the US and largely concerns the difficulties students face in terms of choosing their major (Schaller, 2005; Gahagan and Hunter, 2006; Tobolowsky, 2008), apart from one UK project funded by the HEA (Thompson et al., 2013). Although typically UK students join a UK degree with a specialism from year one there are still option modules to choose and in the particular case of accountancy this involves decisions that relate to professional accreditation. Rashid however, appears to be struggling with this decision and the advice given by tutors which seems to suggest that theoretical modules are not recommended to international students. Further, Hasan, despite having joined an accountancy degree which would suggest a direct career progression, is still in his second year working through a range of quite disparate career options. That educators appear uninterested in the second year is possibly due to the perception that the transition issues of first year have been more immediately demanding of their attention (Scott and Cashmore, 2010). However, Tobolowsky (2008, p.60) argues that the second year is of major importance as it is when students choose module options, make decisions about their

future careers and thus '[clarify] their sense of purpose'. Further to this, attention to the second year is warranted, she claims, as it is a high risk year for student drop out (Tobolowsky, 2008). Whilst in the UK the recent HEA (Thompson et al., 2013, p.14) report indicates that '41-48% of completing students experienced lower grades in their second year'.

'Students who have not clarified their reasons for attending college or have not selected a major may feel the inertia, confusion, and resulting stress that define the sophomore slump' (Tobolowsky, 2008, p.61). Gahagan and Stuart Hunter (2006) argue that the transition on to the second year can present a more significant challenge than that of the first year transition. Significantly, they (Gahagan and Stuart Hunter, 2006) argue as more resources are typically put into supporting students in their first year, students can find themselves alone during their second year. The UK HE system is obviously significantly different from that of the US with students engaging in, for the most part, three year programmes with a designated degree subject from year one. This does not mean however, that all our students arrive knowing why they are here and exactly what they want to get from their degree. There are still choices to be made in terms of option modules and in some cases whether to choose to do a placement year, all of which demand awareness of career progression options and so the issues Tobolowsky highlights for US based sophomores very likely would find resonance with some UK HE second year students. Further, a similar focus on first year transition programmes and initiatives has taken place in the UK HE sector, which may well see second year students feeling left to deal with the transition into second year alone.

Magolda (1992, p.72) highlights the second year as a time when students are developing their academic skills and moving from 'absolute knowing' to 'transitional knowing' strategies. However, she remarks that 'independent knowing' is evident in only one per cent of second year students and does not significantly increase until after graduation (Magolda, 1992, p.72). Of course Magolda's theories are located within a much wider discussion around epistemology, a discourse too large for me to do justice to within this thesis. I refer to Magolda as she makes very useful differentiations between students on different years of their courses which contribute to an understanding of the skills students develop as they transition from one year of study to another. This is pertinent to my study as I compare

continuing second year students, to direct entrant students and then consider both these cohorts in their final year.

The recent HEA (Thompson et al., 2013) project points to limited research within the UK context highlighting just two studies (Lieberman and Remedios, 2007 and Jacobs and Newstead 2000), which both point to a dip in interest and motivation amongst second year HE students. The findings of the HEA (Thompson et al., 2013) study show that second year students were less interested in mastering their subject than their first year counterparts being motivated more by assessment outcomes. This focus on 'performance goals' was also accompanied by '[a] statistically significant increase in maladaptive procrastination ... recognised as a common response to increased pressure and anxiety in assessment' (Thompson et al., 2013, p.15). Ironically the support that students received both in school and in the first year at university seems to contribute to a second year dip as this, students felt, 'had left them ill prepared for facing the increased expectations of independent learning encountered in the second year' (Thompson et al., 2013, p.15). It may also '[enable] failing students to pass, who then struggle in the second year' (Thompson et al., 2013, p.19). Those most likely to be affected are international, black and ethnic minority, and part-time students (Thompson et al., 2013, p.19). Students also reported using the second year as a time to relax becoming more strategic in assigning priority to tasks choosing assignments over attendance in some cases (Thompson et al., 2013, p.19). However, on a more positive note the option to choose modules was motivational for some students who now felt that what they were studying related better to their personal interests (Thompson et al., 2013).

The social dynamic of the participants in my study changed in the second year. There were shifting relationships and groups of people in reaction to the increasing challenge of the academic workload, the reduction of scaffolding of the assessment tasks, the growing realisation that independent study was an expectation and a necessity for improved outcomes, and the influx of a large group of direct entrant students from around the world. Relationships shifted to accommodate these external forces influencing intrinsic motivations. The second year then was for the students about finding out about themselves as learners and who their friends should be, as careful choices here they perceived would affect their chances of a successful outcome. Magolda (1992) describes the transitional

knowing phase of learning as moving from acquisition to understanding, which appears to be particularly relevant to the second year experience. However, this was not always a seamless and unproblematic transition and there appeared to be resistance, resentment, disorientation and lack of confidence as students negotiated this change. The international students in this study were also direct entrants on to the second year and so had particular issues in terms of adapting to a new educational environment (as discussed above, pp.121-126). For them there appeared to be a period of culture shock as they made the transition from one educational context to another. Transition was not only experienced by direct entrant students. During their first year Afzal, Wasim, Hasan and Rashid were also going through a period of adjustment and transition from one educational context to another. The sense of culture shock may not have been as extensive as it was for their direct entrant peers but it may have been significant resulting in a desire for the familiar and the comfortable, in terms of both friendships and learning strategies. I have already commented on social relationships above (p. 123) and so the rest of this section will concentrate on learning, however one point remains, which is that this transition from first to second year may well have affected the friendship choices the students made in their second year and may have accounted in some part for them retaining the friendships they formed in their first year rather than reaching out and making new friendships with direct entrant students. Wasim, Hasan, Afzal and Rashid all had UK and international friends whom they met in first year and so their friendship choices in the early stages of year two did not appear to be made on cultural grounds but rather on longevity. However, the result remained that these choices did perhaps make the process of forming friendships for the international students, who entered directly into the second year, more difficult as they had to break into already established networks.

The students who continued into the second year from a UK based first year talked a great deal about the changing level of support they received with a perceived significant reduction in the second year. This centred particularly on the amount of information that was given to them through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and set course textbooks, which simplified the acquisition of knowledge process. Knowledge was given to them in first year and they were passive receivers. This relationship to their tutors and to knowledge changed in second year when they were given less and expected to find more for

themselves. The direct entrant students who were all international students did not differ in this regard, only they did not talk about a VLE; the knowledge was given to them by and large by the tutor in the classroom it would seem. Set texts were heavily relied upon and knowledge was tested through examination; mostly multiple choice. Essays were required but structures, and it seems detailed direction, were given to them by the tutor so that assessments were clear and expectations transparent. Questions were practised until the correct answer was found. Uncertainty in terms of knowledge and its generation existed only in the form of not knowing the answer, but this could be given by the teacher. Wanting more direction and clearer explanations of the teachers' expectations was not limited to one particular group of students, although it would be fair to say that in the face of what was a very new teaching and learning experience the direct entrant second year students talked about this need more than their continuing peers. This, it seems, was not a culturally specific need, but a response to the disorientation of a new environment, not having experienced some forms of assessment before and not being clear about what tutors expect.

In terms of knowledge all the students experienced in this year a shift from the perception that there is *an* answer to one that there are many possible answers; so knowledge became uncertain. The students began to see that this uncertain status of knowledge required more engagement from them as they now needed to be active participants in the production of knowledge. This, for the students, involved working independently to read and research their subject, gathering information from a variety of sources, using one another as sources of knowledge and participants in constructive discourse which facilitated the refinement of knowledge, asking questions and participating in class discussions.

Hasan seemed to experience a dip in motivation, but seemed to find that working with others could be motivational. The direct entrant students for the most part did not seem to experience this dip in motivation, perhaps because of the novelty of their new educational environment. However, the direct entrant students did seem to experience a challenge to their confidence and in some cases, particularly Nadia, real anger and disaffection at what she saw as the injustice of her situation. The challenge to her perception of knowledge and the role of the teacher and learner in knowledge creation was a real barrier to her learning in this new context. She was not the only student who experienced resentment at the fact

that the teachers were not, as they saw it, teaching them but she was the most vocal on this subject and the angriest. The fact that the teacher could not give them the answers was, for the other direct entrants, disconcerting and caused them to lack confidence in what they were doing. This transition to a new perception of knowledge was marked by a sudden moment of enlightenment for Mei and Ai who simultaneously had the realisation that there was more than one possible answer to an essay question and that in fact they were assessed, not on their final conclusion but, on the quality of their reasoning. This realisation came as a result of constructive dialogue with a more experienced peer, also an international student but continuing from first year, which demonstrates the significance of collaborative working relationships across groups.

Grades appeared to be significant motivators and had the power to inspire great happiness or sadness and were associated with pride and shame. The findings of a recent HEA (Thompson et al., 2013) study show that second year students are less interested in mastering their subject than their first year counterparts being motivated more by assessment outcomes. The students in my study were also motivated by the desire to learn, to understand, to develop their skills and knowledge and by employability and career aspirations. This was possibly because they were on a vocational course and so had clearer career plans, although this did not remain the case for all students as they progressed into third year, or because they had made a huge decision to study abroad for very clear career enhancing associated reasons.

Criticality and independence in learning

What critical thinking (CT) is and how it should be taught is far from clearly defined or agreed and continues to be debated. Almost 25 years ago, in 1990, the American Philosophical Association (APA) published its *Critical Thinking: A Statement of Expert Consensus for Purposes of Educational Assessment and Instruction* report in an attempt to define critical thinking, although there was no attempt to make any pedagogical recommendations.

The report identified six core skills in relation to CT: '(1) interpretation, (2) analysis, (3) evaluation, (4) inference, (5) explanation and (6) self-regulation' (Facione, 1990, p.4).

Despite this attempt at a definitive statement the debate still rages around what critical thinking is and how it should be taught. This has been largely an American discussion which Moore (2004) and Mason (2007) divided into two camps with Ennis the main protagonist of the generalist argument and McPeck arguing for a discipline specific approach, but there is also a significant debate amongst Australian academics (see Moore, 2004, Davies, 2006; Mason, 2007; Davies, 2013; Moore, 2013) on the same lines. Whilst UK HE has also largely taken critical thinking to be a key goal of a university education, the significant difference between the UK and the US would appear to be the reliance in the US on CT tests and the development of CT curriculum. Whereas in contrast, within the UK HE context, the development of skills has more often than not been seen as an implicit process of socialisation that students experience whilst tackling the challenge of their chosen discipline (Walker and Finney, 1999), although CT has appeared as an AS and A level subject. Indeed there has been strong argument within the literature for embedded skills development rather than a divorced approach, which it is argued results in a lack of interest amongst the students who fail to see the relevance to their studies and are unable to transfer the skills into the subject specific curriculum (Lea and Street, 1998). 'Siegel makes short work of this longstanding disagreement between [Ennis and McPeck], pointing out that both subject-neutral and subject-specific principles and skills are relevant to reason, assessment and hence to critical thinking' (Mason, 2007, p.342).

There has also been a related argument for the development of self-awareness through reflection and its relationship to the development of critical thinking (Walker and Finney, 1999) and many UK HE courses incorporate some form of reflective writing within their assessment strategies. This sees CT as a characteristic of the self-directed learner (Knowles, 1975; Boud, 1988; Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2011). It also relates to the constructive discourses of Mezirow's transformative learning theory, all of these contribute to an understanding of the dynamic processes at play in the development of autonomy and, as such, relate to the focus of my study.

Knowles (1975, p. 18) defined self-directed learning as:

a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes.

Here Knowles (1975) describes a process whereby learners take an increasing level of responsibility for their own learning. His theories have been seen as influential by many. Boud (1988, p.17) describes this as autonomy and categorises it as firstly, 'the goal of education'; secondly, 'an approach to educational practice'; and thirdly, 'an integral part of learning of any kind'. In these approaches learning is constituted as a negotiation between the learner and the instructor with the learner taking responsibility for goal setting, evaluation and reflection on the learning process (Boud, 1988). Here the focus is on the process of learning rather than the nature of knowledge. Magolda's (1992) concept of ways of knowing describes a changing relationship to the nature of knowledge where students develop an independence from their teachers' authority and begin to see knowledge as negotiated.

Magolda's (1992) model for understanding how we come to know as learners categorises four distinct ways of knowing. In 'absolute knowing' students are the receivers of knowledge, which they believe 'exists in an absolute form' and they expect the tutor to provide (Magolda, 1992, p.74). 'Uncertainty occurs only when the student does not know the answer' (Magolda, 1992, p.74). As the student matures 'transitional knowing' develops where understanding is displayed (Magolda, 1992, p.75). Understanding involves 'more exploration than that required for the acquisition of knowledge' and so peers become more significant in this process (Magolda, 1992, p.105). In 'independent knowing' the students learn to 'think for [themselves], 'share [their] views' and develop their 'own perspective' (Magolda, 1992, p.75). 'The basic assumption of uncertainty changes both the process and source of knowing substantially' (Magolda, 1992, p.137). There are many ways of looking at things, varying viewpoints, arguments, perspectives and the students' own perspective is valid (Magolda, 1992). Further maturity leads to 'contextual knowing' where students learn to problem-solve and apply their learning (Magolda, 1992, p.75).

‘Thinking for oneself was the hallmark of independent knowing. It remains the defining characteristic of contextual knowing, but there is a change from thinking totally independently to thinking for oneself within the context of knowledge generated by others’, which ‘require[s] judgement’ (Magolda, 1992, p.168- p.169).

Phillips and Bond’s (2004, p. 293) New Zealand study reports on a literature that suggests that although CT is seen as the main aim and outcome of HE, the skill is in reality limited amongst graduates and in their own study they concluded that ‘the way in which students in the sample constituted critical thinking was disappointing’. However, Dwyer, Hogan, Harney and O’Reilly (2014) make reference to a survey conducted by the University of Western Australia in 2007 which found that 54% of students felt that the teaching they experienced did not provide opportunities for them to develop critical thinking skills. They (Dwyer et al., 2014, p.692) add that students are ‘rarely’ consulted on what they feel ‘constitutes CT’. Their study (Dwyer et al., 2014, p.692) found that ‘while students’ overall conceptualisation of CT is consistent with existing frameworks, students’ descriptions were, in part, broader, less abstract and more concrete accounts of particular skills identified in existing frameworks; and were also primarily focused on utility or function rather than ideal principles of action’. This Dwyer et al. (2014, p.703) suggest, reflects the stage of CT development the students have achieved and indicates a need for opportunities for ‘deep reflection and practice that allows for key abstractions and principles to emerge as derivatives of concrete engagement’.

Where there is the added complication of a second language being used as the medium for the learning the issue is more complex, with students showing more difficulty in thinking critically in a second language (Floyd, 2011). A similar finding was also reported by Lun, Fischer and Ward (2010, p.613) who conclude that ‘the difference in critical thinking appears to be more of a linguistic issue rather than a cultural one’. Chiu and Cowan (2012) argue that it may be the academic terminology that makes the skills less accessible for some international students. The term *critical* has, they argue, negative connotations for some students associated with expressing disagreement, but through support they can overcome their inhibitions (Chiu and

Cowan, 2012). Similarly, Frambach, Driessen, Chan and Van Der Vleuten (2012, p.744) found cultural challenges to self-directed learning development, however acknowledge 'that students across three different cultures, albeit to different degrees, mentioned similar behaviours, needs and preferences with regard to alleviating uncertainty, consulting senior students, asking for tutor guidance and focusing on examination content'. The students' difficulties then were located in their novice status within their subject rather than being culturally specific (Frambach et al., 2012). Butcher and Sumner (2011, p.123) agree that where students are asked to engage in self-directed learning activities in the early stages of their courses they 'face a *sensemaking paradox*', as they lack the subject knowledge necessary to enable them to engage critically with their learning. Jones' (2005, p.345) study compared Chinese and Australian students' understanding of CT and found 'a considerable level of similarity'. Students' understanding was 'strongly influenced by the teaching context' and 'very closely reflected the guidelines given', so students were seeking to 'understand and achieve what was expected of them' (Jones, 2005, p.345). Working in a second language and lack of similar previous experience of the assessment style accounts for differences between the two groups however, Jones (2005, p. 350) argues that the Chinese students adapted quickly to their new educational environment and were 'no more reluctant to engage in critical thinking than their local peers'. Jones (2005, p.351) argues that the students' understanding of CT and the quality of the CT they produce was influenced and 'limited not by cultural background but by context'. It would seem that these students, whatever their prior educational context and experiences, engaged with the exercise on the basis of the tutor's instruction. The students engaged at the first level of CT because that was how the task was framed (Jones, 2005).

Taking responsibility for one's own learning and moving away from reliance upon the authority of the teacher and a certainty in knowledge is a process of maturation in learning (Magolda, 1992). Difficulties in the ability to think independently and critically about a topic arise from the students' novice status in the subject (Frambach et al., 2012; Butcher and Sumner, 2011). Independence comes with a developing sense of confidence both in subject knowledge and skills; knowing what and knowing how. The participants in my study

developed this independence variously during their third year through a process of growing realisation that knowledge is negotiated, in response to tutor feedback, grades gained and through collaborative working and constructive dialogue. The process was incremental but marked with moments of sudden realisation. Learning from others and learning how to learn were fundamental in the process. Both were marked by a developing ability to think critically. In the initial stages of the study the students were reliant on the teachers; this was true for international and UK students alike. They regarded the transfer of knowledge and clear direction as being the role of a good teacher. The move to a more equal relationship with teachers where relationships and interaction were emphasised was clearly seen during the second and third years. Here the students saw their role in the learning process as a much more active one. They could no longer rely on the teachers to give them all the information. They sought answers and input from a wider range of sources. This process was informed by a new appreciation of knowledge as uncertain and negotiated, new relationships with their peers where collaboration and constructive dialogue were key factors that built and re-built knowledge and knowledge frameworks and a newly found confidence both in their subject knowledge and their ability to learn for themselves. Being critical then was not just about the ability to construct discursive, reference-based arguments in essays and exams but was about a growing self-awareness and critical stance towards knowledge, skills, perspectives and self in relation to those they shared the learning experience with and what that meant about who they were becoming. Relationships were strongly emphasised by the students in terms of what they could learn from one another, how they could support one another, but also how they could be abused sometimes by others. Some people did not contribute as much as others. The sense of community was strongly emphasised by these students who saw that as a benefit but also a responsibility.

Much of the literature focuses on the difference between learning cultures and the concept of criticality within UK HE, with a largely deficit stance being taken in relation to international students' ability to think critically within a western construct, indeed the concept of criticality argues Nichols (2003, p.136) has 'become a dividing practice'. However, there appeared to be no culturally-based difference in students' ability to engage critically with their learning in my study. The students talked about wanting clearer instructions and to be told the answer in the second year but developed a different

relationship to knowledge making, to their teachers and to their learning in the third year. There may have been more disorientation among international students in their second year as they were direct entrant students reacting to a new environment, and this may have led to a period of anxiety, frustration, even anger but this was understandable given their novice status within that learning community. But by the third year there appeared to be no difference in their understanding of criticality than their UK peers.

One focus in the literature has been on the use of rote learning strategies by Chinese students (Nield, 2007; Marton et al., 1997); however, in my study both international students and UK students talked about memorisation frequently, especially in relation to learning theory. Li talked about the relationship between memory and analysis seeing the two as interlinked and co-dependent. Li's explanation of the relationship between memory and analysis would seem to fit with Marton et al.'s (1997) explanation of a process of meaningful memorisation resulting in understanding. Hasan also talked about use of memorisation, particularly for theory and explained how he used mnemonics. He also talked about memorisation, analysis and synthesis of ideas and theory, building his own analysis on to what he had memorised. So for both students there was an interconnected relationship between memory and understanding. This, it would seem, is a learning approach that is constructed by the reliance in UK HE on exams as an assessment strategy. Exams are difficult to tackle without memorisation and so such an assessment encourages and reinforces this learning strategy.

The concept of criticality it would seem was, in the initial stages of their course, unclear to Li and Hakim. But then it has to be said that this was not unproblematic for Hasan, Rashid and Afzal either. They suggested that there was a progression from first year to second where more use of reading was expected in their writing. The development of criticality therefore seemed to have a direct relationship to the students' perception of the authority of knowledge, who created it and owned it, a growing engagement in their learning in terms of their discussion of knowledge, a growing confidence in their own ideas, a sense of exploration around their subject reading for assignments and feeding that into their assignments. This was in response to feedback, improved understanding of what was expected by tutors and of what constituted academic engagement with a question.

This expectation of use of their own reading and research in their writing increased in the final year and so the students were learning to apply the skill of criticality in a developmental manner. The fact that they expressed some concerns about this may have been explained in part by the fact that they were Accountancy students. There is a growing body of literature which details Accountancy students' reluctance to write ascribing their choice of course to an expectation that it will be more about numbers than words (Gardner, Milne, Stringer and Whiting, 2005; Arquero, Hassall, Joyce and Donoso, 2007).

Development of transformative Study methods

You as a learner

Acculturation placed me
In relation to you the host
And I was disorientated (Zhou et al., 2008).
I didn't know where to go.
Chinese auditing and UK accounting
The same I thought.
But when I came here I found everything
Was different.
You are so smart, I am not.
Floating through life,
Thinking life is a dream.
Individuals known collectively
Lost in useless stereotypes,
Left behind,
High achievers with lowered expectations.
But I tried to be good here.
Considered. Questioning. Taking my time.
To work it out for myself.
Study is challenging in many ways
Not least to the sense of self.
You are so clever, I am not.
But if you tell me what to do I can do it.
The transition from one educational culture to another
Forces the student to adapt
To 'the frames of reference of the host country'
The self constricted within these existing principles (Luzio-Lockett, 1998,
p.209).
When Language skills are challenged

And confidence battered
And grades are lower than expected.
You are so clever, I am not.
The self squeezed by (Luzio-Lockett, 1998, p.210);
Socialisation and acculturation (Tubin and Lapidot, 2008).
'Intertwining' the global and local
'Ordering' and 'buffering' (Tubin and Lapidot, 2008, p.212-13).
'Two cultural personnas' (Wong, 2007, p.78)
Study methods new and old intertwined
Long hours of study
Rewriting practice essays
Working in translation
Lost in translation
Memorising essays for exams
Code switching
Chinglish
Students 'creatively deal[ing] with ... cultural and personal values
As they cross cultural and linguistic boundaries' (Morita, 2009, p.445)
Can you not see 'active human agents
With unique histories, aspirations, and resources?'
You have 'a critical role in shaping students' positionalities' (p.458).
Feeder institutions,
Where we create a little England
Place them at once within and without.
Unable to recognise the differences
To adapt again where adaptation has
Already taken place.
A bridge that doesn't reach far enough
The difference only geography?
What went before a preparation,
Yet further development is frozen,
The familiar held close, useful or not.
At school you were told what to do and how and when – simple.

Transformative Learning Theory

Phase 1: A disorientating dilemma

'Autonomous thinking may be understood as
A competence acquired through transformative learning' (Mezirow, 2000,
p.28-29).
Wholly transformative, a new perspective dawns,
Attempting to adjust they are disorientated

Their meaning-making compass fails to plot the way
'In a divergent new cultural context' (Ritz, 2010, p.159).
The power of language resides with the teacher
We dare only to ask after class
Questions about things we can't understand
Too many students,
Our English so poor,
We can't explain clearly
The problem misunderstood in the lecture
There's no other way to find out.
Tutorial words shooting stars
So distant you can't find out,
Ask him to say it again,
If you don't your time is wasted.
Too shy to ask
I can't catch the knowledge
I don't know which point to make
Alternative approaches,
The best and the worst
I have read every word
I have covered every corner of this book but I still cannot.
Remembering is not easy
Knowledge prepared in note form
But the question remains unanswered.
Essays do not form because
The words make you confused.

Phase 2: A self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame

They accepted us,
We thought we would get more care
But when we got here we were shocked
No one cared.
We come from another place
Another style of study.
No assignments, no presentations, only exams.
But not essay exam.
You expect new students to get high marks from an essay exam?
"What's your problem?
You have to tell me one specific question".
"No, be more specific.
You have to answer and we will see."

That's not help.
You have to teach me how to answer the question;
'Habits of mind' 'firmly established'
'Opposing viewpoints' 'challenging and rejected' (Mezirow, 2000, p.8).
After you teach me one
Absolute knowing (Magolda, 1992)
Then I will do all of them,
But you want me to do it without teaching.

Phase 3: A critical assessment of assumptions

I relied on the school teacher to give me the answer.
Now I'm on my own I don't want to do it.
Lectures only give a glimpse of what there is.
So I search alone
Because I know nobody is going to come and tell me the answer.
'[metacognition], they monitor their own progress and products
As they are engaged in their first-order cognitive tasks' (Kitchener, 1983,
p.230, cited in Mezirow, 2000)
Before we focused on how to solve the question.
Every day we would repeat similar questions.
Over and over a hundred times.
'At the first level individuals compute, memorize, read and comprehend'
(Kitchener, 1983, p.230, cited in Mezirow, 2000)).
Practise without any reflection
Made lazy I found
Every answer in one book.
Energy was not wasted searching many places.
But here I need to find sources
To check and select what is useful.
Before all the teaching was practise.
The teacher told us all about the knowledge.
But here we must think.
'Epistemic cognition' 'the limits of knowledge'
'The certainty of knowledge and the criteria for knowing' (Kitchener, 1983,
p.230, cited in Mezirow, 2000).

Phase 4: Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared

I think study here is quite different.
In China I could successfully graduate from university
But it is not equivalent to the UK.

Here you need to try to work harder to graduate from university.
The Chinese teacher teaches,
But the students lose their activity,
Their independence to do research lost
They just play and waste their time.
Numbers are juggled with expert finesse
A, b, c or d select the best answer.
No explanation necessary.
If you give us the question before
We can do this
Exam time
It is not enough for us
We are not native speakers.
Transformative learning is challenging
Learners may well withdraw,
Long held values and beliefs are confronted (Ritz, 2010).

Phase 5: Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions

I want to plan for my own work
To force myself to do meaningful things
To make myself more independent, to make me successful.
Articles help to gain extra points and
Writing gets better over time.
The best thing is to read,
Read as much as you can.
In China I wrote point, point, point, point.
But now I must bring it together
A cohesive flow of words and meaning
Words a tool kit,
Defining and gathering the links
Between the question and knowledge.
But English Chinese interferes
Chinglish words are wasted.
We discuss.
Engaged in 'constructive discourse' (Mezirow, 2000, p.8).
And different people have different ideas.
And you can know more knowledge.
Building 'relational empathy across differences' (Schapiro, Wasserman,
Gallegos, 2012, p.359),
A teaching style built on relationships
I make more effort.

When I read English books I can't remember.
I understand but my own words refuse to come.
I need to read it several times and
To remember every word and
The structure and then
It is not my words and
It is no good to use in the exam.
I memorize theory.
Learn a few things and fill in the gaps,
Memorising and analysing.
I make mnemonics.
Sometimes I mix them up
Methods a hybrid of old and new
Some work some don't.
Shared knowledge,
Time spent to work it out
Together.
That is what university is about.
You learn things, you add a bit more
Remembered in repeated writing.
Words not numbers
These prepared with papers from the past
Books not the web
Those answers are not good enough
Remembered method not answers
So many ways you could do that.
Writing definitions, listing features,
One advantage and then another.
But how do I get links?
I just read one book
I read the question and explain it
I have to translate it
And read about it in my language.
I memorise in English.
But the meaning escapes
And I can't explain and analyse.
But if I just use Chinese I can't write in English,
It is so difficult to do a transfer.

Phase 6: Planning a course of action

The big questions I need to prepare

I need to read things faster
And answer questions faster
Make notes on each chapter
Supported with class notes
Read as much as you can
Discuss, compare, contrast.....

Phase 7: Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans

I think I can
Focus on the question,
Highlight the key words,
Outline the requirements of the question
Start by writing the introduction.
Discuss, advantages and disadvantages,
Explain, an example
Conclude.

Phase 8: Provisional trying of new roles

People have different ideas?
You prove your point.
Everyone has different conclusions?
The teacher just looks at your reasons so you have to say
Enough reasons to support your idea.
Ah!
Sudden enlightenment (Mezirow, 2000)

Phase 9: Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships

We work together
I study everywhere I see a word, I take my dictionary.
Listen again and again
Until I recall and recite the words
Stored in workbooks for future use.
Third year is harder.
The marking is stricter
I don't know what they're looking for.
I think they want much more from us, much more.
In every question we need to refer to theory
Everything challenging, challenging everything.
Finding out for ourselves.
More writing, more reading.

Gathering different points of view
From different authors and academics
Giving your own opinion based on their opinions.
I am writing my assignments differently this semester,
Seeking help to see where I can improve.
From my results I have got better.

Phase 10: A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's perspective

The English structure helps me to explain, and I just use English.
Now I take more time
To be thoughtful.
Before ideas came straight away
And I just put things down,
But now I look at things from different viewpoints.
We make judgements
Reasoning through the answers
I can learn to do the questions.
I teach others how to do it
Before the tutor gives us the answer
I can find it myself.
Team work is based on your own work,
Everyone does their best.
Has their own ideas
We share.
Relationships with each other stressed,
And then we can work better.
This life gives me more confidence,
Makes me more positive
Every day you learn more about yourself.
'Personal growth and awareness' builds (Schapiro, et. al., 2012, p.359).
Pushed you research independently.
And then you can share with others, that is fair.
Do some analysis, evaluate, be selective, apply the knowledge
Synthesis is everything
Showing you understand.
Read the bold words
Underlining their importance
Use my own words to summarise
List the key points
Structure your knowledge and then find examples

These are primary level
We can get this level
In high school I was nervous to put up my hand
To answer the teacher's questions,
But in university I have the confidence to answer questions.
To discuss my weaknesses
'To critically participate in life
Rather than run with the unconscious herd' (Cranton and Roy, 2003, p.94).
Learn more about others.
So now it is 100% me
The tutors can only give you direction
They can't actually put something in your brain or in your head.
I do this myself.
'In adulthood knowing how you know
Involves awareness of the context – sources, nature and consequences –
Of your interpretations and beliefs
And those of others' (Mezirow, 2000, p.7).
I think during my three years at university
I have developed new ways of working.
It is 50/50 learning accountancy and learning how to learn
So you become more independent as a learner.
In this process the assumptions of either
Ourselves or others are questioned
Resulting in reflective action (Mezirow, 2000).
You need confidence to never give up.
It makes you independent.
You grow up.

A defining condition of being human is our urgent need to understand and order
the meaning of our experience, to integrate it with what we know to avoid chaos
(Mezirow, 2000, p.3).

Although they acknowledge there are a range of seemingly disparate views of the process of
transformation in learning, Cranton and Roy (2003, p.87-88) provide a useful definition of
transformative learning theory:

We make meaning out of the world through our experiences. What happens
once, we expect to happen again. Through this process, we develop habits of
mind or a frame of reference for understanding the world, much of which is

uncritically assimilated. We absorb, in the process of daily living, values, assumptions, and beliefs about how things are without much thought.

When something happens that does not fit with our previous experience and understanding we try to make sense of it through reflection either individually or with others (Cranton and Roy, 2003). When this reflection results in a change in habit of mind or frame of reference we see the world differently and thus transformative learning has taken place (Cranton and Roy, 2003).

Cranton and Roy (2003, p.87) suggest that '[t]here has been considerable debate in the literature as to whether transformative learning is rational or extrarational, reflective or imaginative, cognitive or emotional, individual or social'. Whilst Mezirow's theory focuses on transformation other views have alternative perspectives. The table below details Taylor's (2008, p.7-8) review of transformative theory:

Table 3: Transformative theory

Theoretical Perspective	Central Characteristics	Theorists
Psychoanalytic View	A process of individuation: Discovery of new talents Sense of empowerment Deeper understanding of inner self Greater sense of self-responsibility	Boyd and Myers, 1988 Cranton, 2000 Dirkx, 2000
Psychodevelopmental View	Lifelong learning Epistemological change relationships	Daloz, 1986 Kegan, 1994
Social-emancipatory View	focus on society role of context	Taylor, 2008

In response to these disparate views Cranton and Roy (2003, p.87) propose an integrated approach which includes, 'individuation' and 'authenticity' to provide a 'holistic' understanding of transformative learning theory. Cranton and Roy (2003) argue that transformative learning may be experienced through any combination of these depending on the individual and the context. It is important to distinguish individuation from individuality and individualism, it being a process of coming to know who we are and how

we fit in with those around us (Cranton and Roy, 2003). This '[t]ransformation is the emergence of the self' (Cranton and Roy, 2003, p.92).

Authenticity by contrast 'is the expression of the genuine self in the community. To create that genuine self, we need to critically participate in life rather than run with the unconscious herd' (Cranton and Roy, 2003, p. 94). Thus Cranton and Roy (2003) argue that authenticity and individuation are linked and the process of developing both is transformative.

Table 4: A Holistic Perspective of Transformative Learning

Individuation is transformative	Transformation is individuating
Becoming authentic is transformative	Transformation is becoming authentic
Becoming authentic is individuating	Individuation is becoming authentic

(Cranton and Roy, 2003, p.96).

Our beliefs and values and how we feel about them are anchored in our 'biographical, historical [and] cultural' context (Mezirow, 2000, p.3). Transformation theory involves 'becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation' (Mezirow, 2000, p.4). For Mezirow (2000, p.5) therefore 'transformative learning pertains to epistemic cognition'. The process of learning Mezirow (2000) describes as the comparative analysis of the meaning we ascribe to experience which in turn influences how we might act in the future. Where learning is transformative our interpretation of experience results in changes to 'our taken for granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habit of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive' (Mezirow, 2000, p.7). This is interesting in relation to both international and UK students where assumptions and expectations are changing in relation to the challenges of study in a new context as they transition from country to country or through the years of study of their degree.

Transformative learning leads to autonomy in thinking therefore for this process to take place it is necessary for the learner to be critically aware of the cultural assumptions that influence their understandings and interpretations (Mezirow, 2000). 'In adulthood, knowing how you know involves awareness of the context – sources, nature, and consequences – of your interpretations and beliefs and those of others' (Mezirow, 2000, p.7). This process of

awareness raising and questioning of assumptions takes place through 'participation in constructive discourse' where learning from others enables a re-evaluation of understandings and interpretations (Mezirow, 2000, p.8). This does not mean simply adjusting one's own thinking to match that of others, but rather to use the experiences of others critically to enable us 'to negotiate and act on our own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings' and therefore 'to gain greater control over our lives as socially responsible, clear-thinking decision makers' (Mezirow, 2000, p.8).

How we make an experience meaningful depends on our '*frame of reference*' which is 'composed of two dimensions'; 'habit of mind...expressed as a point of view' (Mezirow, 2000, p.16-18). These are firmly established and personal and so opposing viewpoints are often seen as very challenging and rejected resulting in learning only where ideas fit with our own frames of reference (Mezirow, 2000). However, in transformative learning new ideas are allowed to change established ways of thinking. Thus:

Learning occurs in one of four ways: by elaborating existing frames of reference, by learning new frames of reference, by transforming points of view, or by transforming habit of mind (Mezirow, 2000, p.19).

This may be a process of subtle changes or a sudden enlightenment and may result from purposeful action or unconscious socialisation (Mezirow, 2000). We can decide to look at things from another person's perspective and so change our point of view but we cannot similarly adopt someone else's habit of mind, such transformations take place through a process of transitional phases (Mezirow, 2000). In this process the assumptions of either ourselves or others are questioned resulting in reflective action (Mezirow, 2000).

There is a connection between the theories of transformative learning, ideas about group-work and adult learning theories in that each emphasises the importance of dialogue for social learning and personal reflection that leads to learning (Schapiro et al., 2012).

Mezirow's theory of transformative learning includes dialogic communication as an essential element in the process. Schapiro et al. (2012, p.357) drawing on Wasserman's (2004) earlier work present four essential elements that define dialogic communication: 'Continuity in members' commitment and motivation', 'curiosity and openness', 'emotional engagement through story telling', 'reflection and mutual sense-making'.

Thus a dialogic communication group comes together for the purpose and with the expectation that they will share the stories of their personal experience and learn from one another. Further to this, Schapiro et al. (2012, p.358), drawing on Schapiro's (2009, p.112) earlier work, define transformative learning spaces:

(1) learning happens in relationships, (2) in which there is shared ownership and control of the learning space (3) room for the whole person – feelings as well as thoughts, body and soul, as well as mind, (4) and sufficient time for collaboration, action, reflection, and integration, (5) to pursue a process of inquiry driven by the questions, needs, and purposes of the learners.

Building on this Schapiro et al. (2012, p.359) also identify three outcomes of transformative learning groups:

- Personal growth and awareness
- Relational empathy across differences
- Critical systematic consciousness.

These purposes may be distinct or overlapping. The first purpose relates directly to study groups (Schapiro et al., 2012) and therefore to the group formed by the participants in my study, although because of the cross-cultural nature of the group and the intention when volunteering for participation being cross-cultural communication and learning, the second purpose becomes relevant.

Personal growth groups and self-awareness groups provide a context in which individuals can critically assess their assumptions and frames of reference....others are there to help us get in touch with, express, and clarify our own thoughts and feelings (Schapiro et al., 2012, p.363).

In groups for relational empathy across differences 'transformation is often understood to come about ... as a direct outcome of the process of our genuine dialogue with an "other" or others' (Schapiro et al., 2012, p.365).

Mezirow's (2000) theory has developed within a Western educational context of self-improvement through learning. It 'has both individual and social dimensions and implications. It demands that we be aware of how we come to our knowledge and as aware

as we can be about the values that lead us to our perspectives' (Mezirow, 2000, p.8). There are few studies that make use of Mezirow's theory to understand the international student experience; Ritz's (2010) study is an exception. It does not, however, include UK, second year or DE students and significantly does not find the international learning experience to be transformative and therefore differs significantly from my study. Here I apply the theory in the particular context of the learning of both UK and international students. I also show the contrasting experience of students continuing from year one to year two and those entering UK HE directly into year two. I have also used Magolda's (1992) 'ways of knowing' here as a lens applied to all groups. Magolda's original focus was gender differences in US students. Mezirow sees learning as transformative but it is interesting to see how skills development impacts that process and in particular the role that skills development plays in the development autonomy in learning and so his theory can usefully be used as a lens through which to see such development.

'Autonomous thinking may be understood as a competence acquired through transformative learning' (Mezirow, 2000, p.28-29). One aim of my study was to follow students on their journey to an independent approach to learning. I argue that the development of learning strategies and skills are fundamentally important in this process and so have focussed on this aspect of the students' experience highlighting points in their journey that appeared to be significant in the formulation of new or adapted skills and strategies. As Mezirow's theory centres on the transformative nature of learning it has a particular relevance to my study which focuses on the development of transformative learning skills. His theory also highlights the development of autonomous thinking as an outcome of transformative learning and as such relates directly to my aim to explore the students' journey to independence in learning through skills development. It is therefore highly applicable as a theoretical lens through which to view the students' stories. Mezirow's theory sees the learning experience as wholly transformative resulting in a new perspective, whereas here I concentrate on the development of skills. However, I contend, it is through the development of skills that the students become independent in their learning, which in itself is transformative in a fuller sense, as it enables future independent learning.

Ritz (2010, p.159) suggests that '[a]n attempt by international students to adjust to new cultural and academic environments may result in a feeling of disorientation because their meaning-making compass cannot guide their action in a divergent new cultural context'. However, although this first stage of transformative learning theory, as identified by Mezirow, is clearly the experience of many international students, Ritz (2010, p.164) found in her study that because of lack of English language competency '[t]he dialogue required for transformative learning to occur seldom took place'. However, the students in my study frequently discussed in detail how they approached their coursework. Issues around reading and how it informed writing were discussed and they were able to make a connection between previous learning and new learning allowing a transfer of skills which was transformative. Li and Huan also discussed the issue of working in translation and shared ideas about the process of moving from writing and thinking in Chinese to learning their subject using English as the medium, which was a significant step in the process of skills development. Such exchanges between the students were frequent, suggesting that the constructive dialogue necessary to enable transformative learning to take place was happening.

The perceived power of the teacher was also cited by Ritz (2010, p. 164) as a hindrance to 'rational discourse for the majority of the study participants'. Cheung and Ju expressed reluctance to question teachers in large group teaching situations due to shyness; however they suggested that such questioning of concepts and ideas did take place in other situations. In contrast Wasim and Afzal suggested that such questioning was vital to the learning process and were less reluctant to do so in large group situations. Here it would seem confidence in language competence was an issue. The perception of the teacher as the bestower of knowledge may well have hindered the process of transformative learning for some students but not just the international ones. There was a reliance on the teacher and directive learning methods in the initial transition stages from year one to year two and direct entry.

Ritz (2010) explains that in Mezirow's model the process of transformative learning is challenging and one from which learners may well withdraw, especially when they feel that long held values and beliefs are confronted. Some of the participants in her study she felt did draw back at the point where they were faced with changing their meaning-making

systems (Ritz, 2010). For others such a transformative process did take place but perhaps where the personal experience was of great significance; where they were victims of discrimination for example (Ritz, 2010). For Nadia the anger she felt seemed to be a barrier to transformative learning and she did withdraw, literally leaving the course and returning home. For others such as Huan the process of skills development in a new learning context was initially disorientating but ultimately transformative.

Ritz (2010) noted little critical reflection amongst her participants arguing that their reflections were contextual and that further reflection and therefore transformative learning may well take place once participants returned home. However, there were clear examples of this sort of reflection by my participants. Mei moved from a position where she believed study in the UK was not any different to study in China, to questioning the socio-culturally informed expectations her family had of her life decisions. She now did not know where and how she fitted in but knew that she did not want to marry and have children immediately preferring to build a career and travel further first.

The focussed discussions that took place in my study between the students about their study tasks and strategies allowed a process of reflection to take place that was, I would argue, transformative in terms of the learning strategies they developed during the course of their degrees. When my data are viewed through the lens of Mezirow's ten phases we can see progression through these phases. In phase one there was a period of disorientation, a sense of feeling totally lost and having no clear direction, particularly for the direct entrant students. The students seemed to be overwhelmed by the amount of knowledge they were presented with by tutors in lectures, in text books, on the VLE and on the internet. The international students, particularly the Chinese, were disorientated by the teaching style which required them to ask questions and discuss their subject. They looked to the tutor for the answers and were lost when they were not provided by them. This reluctance to engage in a more constructivist pedagogy was perhaps more to do with the students' lack of confidence in their English language competence and shyness than in a resistance to the style itself. Further, the need to be given clear guidance by tutors was not limited to one group; all students asked for this sort of direction. Nadia made an interesting comment about asking questions in that she was told by tutors to be more specific in her questioning and was told to try to answer the question herself first. The tutors here were

obviously trying to push Nadia towards independence in her learning by urging her to try to find the answer herself first before they provided feedback on her attempt. She was resistant to this teaching style and asked to be taught. Here she pointed to what Butcher and Sumner (2011) term the sense-making paradox in that her novice status within the subject prevented her from asking the questions her tutors felt she should. How could she ask the questions she was not yet aware existed and how could she critically engage with a subject in which she was still only a novice? She was reluctant because she was resistant to the new teaching style, because she was a novice in the subject and because she was yet to move from a view of knowledge as absolute. She had not yet moved into transitional knowing. But she was not alone, students across all groups in this study displayed absolute knowing and a reliance on the teacher as the bestower of knowledge in the early stages of year two.

In phase two there was a move to self-blame and anger. The students were often unhappy with their grades and the Chinese students in particular compared themselves unfavourably with their UK peers whom they saw as more intelligent. Nadia was angrier than the rest; she blamed the system for her discontent and was critical of the teaching and assessment styles.

A comparative critical assessment of the students' previous educational experience and their current one was undertaken during constructive discourse signifying a move into phase three. The students were particularly concerned with assessment and the international students in particular worried about essay style exams, which they had not experienced before. They compared themselves and their abilities unfavourably with UK students and focused on the amount of writing they were able to do in the time given, seeing a direct correlation between quantity and marks. They were unable to write as many words and perceived a disadvantage here. They revised by memorising whole essays in the hope that they would be able to replicate them in the exam and that they would be asked a question that fitted the essay they had memorised. This was a strategy they developed in response to this new assessment and to working in English. It is clear that this was a poor study strategy, but one that they were not able to let go of for fear of not being able to write anything at all if they relied on thinking in English in the here and now of the situation. It is interesting that Rashid, who was a continuing student and had much more English language experience, still relied on this exam strategy. In contrast Hasan remembered only

key points and then expanded on these in the exam. It is clear that the cognitive load of memorising and thinking in another language is a disadvantage in this sort of assessment.

Hasan began to see, in this phase, that he could no longer rely on the teacher to give him the answer and that he must read around the subject and do much more for himself. Huan thought that the repetition and practise he experienced as a teaching style in China lacked reflection. In China he was able to find all the answers in one book; he now saw that he had to do more and had to look at a range of sources to find a range of answers. This marked a move in his relation to knowledge from absolute to transitional. There was more than one answer. Hakim regretted this as he saw it as more efficient to find the answers in one place; looking for more information in more sources was time consuming. He saw that this had to be done to get better marks, but had not yet made the connection between the activity and knowledge creation and academic engagement.

During phase four there was a shared awareness of their discontent. The students were unhappy with grades. Certain assessments were not favoured and there was a general awareness that they must work hard, but they did not yet acknowledge that their learning experience was about self-development.

The students explored a range of techniques marking phase five but also indicating a period of a hybridisation of old and new techniques, some of which worked and others which did not. The students also experienced group working and worked on collaborative projects learning much about relationships and managing group assessment. The students were now reading around the subject, using articles and exploring ways in which they could write discursively. Li commented that she was able to quite straightforwardly present points in her essays previously, but that now she must produce an argument that flowed and was reasoned. Huan and Li discussed how they moved between languages and that writing in English was the preferred method as it minimised language interference, but that they did not always have the grammar and vocabulary to do this. Discussion and sharing ideas were beginning to be seen as positive parts of the learning process. There was therefore a movement here from absolute knowledge that only the teacher could bestow, to valuing their own and their peers' contributions to knowledge creation.

Memorisation played an important role for all the students and this was across culture groups. Memorisation was used mostly for theory. But what was distinct for the international students was that they memorised whole sentence structures and wrote out texts repeatedly in order to learn them. This was it would seem, a language rather than a cultural issue, as it related to sentence construction and vocabulary and not having the language to express their ideas “off the cuff”. The students used translation in these early stages, along with reading about the subject in their own language, but also memorised in English so that they had the sentence structure at hand. The students realised that working in English was the better method but had difficulty in doing this.

The students’ plans for future work practices involved an evaluation of what was working and what was not. They realised that translation resulted in language interference and that more work, more reading and more independence was needed.

The students began to seek knowledge from wider sources, more books and journal articles but also from more people; Learning Development Group tutors, peers, subject tutors. The students appeared ready to have a critical input from others into their work and ready to look for more ideas and suggestions as to how they could improve.

New study practices were implemented in phase eight and confidence was built in them in phase nine. The students talked of working on their own to learn theory but with others to work on practical assignments. They were working less with translation; working in English for some tasks and in their first language for others. Memorisation had specific roles now and did not apply to all learning. They were working faster, more efficiently, were open to more viewpoints, more thoughtful, more considered and more independent. They understood how to focus on the question, identify what was relevant, discuss, evaluate, compare, contrast and conclude. This was a marked change from the initial complaints that they needed the teacher to tell them the answer and that they could not catch the knowledge.

In phase ten these skills were consolidated into what appeared to be established working practices; the students reported successes and confidence in marked contrast to their earlier anxiety and disappointment. The students saw the third year as harder but seemed confident that they knew what was expected of them; they needed to read, critically

evaluate and construct reasoned arguments in response to the questions asked and must work more independently. They understood that there were many viewpoints and more than one possible answer and that knowledge was created through constructive discourse and collaboration. Supportive working relationships were vital to their learning.

Nadia, Hakim, Mei, Ai and Rashid initially reported working longer, using translation, repeatedly writing out whole essays in order to memorise them for exams and code switching, none of which they would have done previously. They were critical of their own use of translation and code switching as they realised this produced language interference and resulted in non-standard English. As they progressed they reported working in English increasingly. Whilst for their part the UK students described using just the tutors' PowerPoint slides, class hand-outs, the internet and text books as sources of information during the early stages of their course. They described the direction they were given in high school and the first year of their course and the difficulties they had in moving from these methods to the more independent methods required in years two and three.

The students seemed to be trying to use all the resources they had to fit into their new academic situation where the rules of engagement were different and often obscure. That the methods they had developed were not always successful was a source of frustration, anger or sadness. It would appear that the study techniques and strategies of all the students developed in response to a range of different inputs. The students' engagement with the course, the feedback they received from tutors, the grades they received and the constructive discussions they had with peers all fed into a process of continuous refinement of the ways in which they tackled their studies and assignments. It would seem that the initial strategies were imported from previous study experiences but then successes or failures informed adaptation of these and experimentation in terms of new strategies. In some cases a hybrid of techniques developed. This was particularly the case for non-native speakers who resorted to translation and wholesale memorisation despite knowing that these techniques were limited and laborious. Letting go of these hybrid techniques was however difficult as students appeared to experience a period of stagnation in the face of much that was disorienting. Anxiety, fear and anger in some cases slowed down the movement into the further phases detailed in Mezirow's transformative learning theory. However, for others there was a positive determination to use the experience of learning in

the UK to transform their learning skills. Huan and Li evaluated their recent strategies in relation to their previous ones and found their current practice better.

What marked the tenth phase most markedly was the new confidence that the students appeared to have in their knowledge, skills and their ability to find the answer for themselves with minimal direction from tutors. But, it was also marked by their willingness to share their knowledge and ideas with others and thus learn from others.

Contextual Significances

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that the aim of narrative inquiry is to create new ways of seeing and knowing, I therefore have sought to show in essence what my participants' experiences were, and in doing so to provide readers with 'a place to imagine their own uses and applications' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.42). The arguments I make here are related directly to my context, the context in which this research was gathered and in which I work, but it is my hope that others will find applicability to their own context.

My study explores the experiences of international direct entrant students and UK continuing students' skills development during the second and third year of their undergraduate degree in the UK. My research questions were:

1. What role do study skills play in the development of independence in learning for the UK, continuing and direct entrant international students in this study?
2. What significant characteristics delineate the second year and direct entrant experiences?
3. What is the students' perception of the role their peers play in their development as learners?
4. In what ways can data be collected and represented such that equality of multiple voice and interpretation are enabled?

This section is divided into 5 sections as follows:

- 1. Communication/collaboration/learning from one another (objective 3)**
- 2. Direct entrant experience (objective 2)**
- 3. Second year experience (objective 2)**
- 4. Criticality and independence in learning (objective 1 and 2)**
- 5. Development of transformative study methods (objective 1)**
- 6. Poetic representation of research (objective 4)**

Communication/collaboration/learning from one another

- There was interaction between international and UK students. Skills were adapted, refined and shared in multiple communities of practice within a landscape of learning.

Cross-cultural working relationships are seen to be problematic the world over; there are many examples of this in global politics. It is therefore, optimistic to expect that young people will be able to negotiate these relationships without help and support. There is much that is similar about the students in my study; the academic challenge they faced being the most obvious. But differences should be acknowledged, shared and celebrated in a supportive environment before we expect students to work together unproblematically.

Communities of practice grew out of mutual support and the sharing of expertise and skills. The question that arises is how we foster integrated CofP given that they are defined by Wenger (2015) as organic in their nature and therefore difficult to formally initiate. The students' experiences in my study suggest that academic need, the challenge of the course, was the stimulus to them seeking out support from one another and from this collaborative, mutually supportive, communities of practice grew. If, as suggested by the students in my study, cross-cultural integration grows out of necessity, then it follows that it is pedagogically sound to construct learning and assessment that necessitates learning from one another internationally. The knowledge and experiences of those from different cultural backgrounds can become an intellectual virtue if it becomes necessary for assessment. Therefore, it would seem logical to use the knowledge of international students to construct learning and assessment contexts that necessitate sharing that knowledge.

As I argue above (p.129) it was when academic need prompted the students to reassess their friendships and support networks that integration took place and this was a process shared across all cultural groups for mutual academic benefit. It would appear that it takes time to develop the confidence and the critical self-awareness necessary to look outside one's own cultural groups for friendship and academic support. The direct entrant students in my study had two years in the UK in which to build this confidence. They were positive about formal interventions that encouraged mixed groups for assessment and felt this made it easier for them to work with UK students. This has implications for the support of international students who are studying on one year top up programmes who, without formal interventions and support, may not have the time to develop the confidence to benefit from intercultural interaction.

A strong story that emerged from my study was the way in which students worked cooperatively to support each other's learning. The students in my study seemed to learn through a process of socialisation but what appeared to be key to this was constructive dialogue and collaborative working partnerships between peers, where both subject knowledge and study strategies were refined.

Direct entrant experience

- The students' narratives revealed an initially differentiated direct entrant experience. These students shared with their continuing peers a novice status in the subject but this was coupled with a novice status in the learning environment.

The needs of direct entrant students are quite distinct from those of their continuing peers. What have they studied before and how? To what extent is our curriculum UK specific? There is much in the literature about the internationalisation of the curriculum (Montgomery, 2010; Ryan, 2013) and my participants did talk about significant differences in curriculum despite having studied at feeder institutions. However, they also talked as much about the way they had been taught and in particular assessed prior to coming to the UK. Making a transition from one educational context was an experience that was not limited to the direct entrant students in my study, the other students were also making transitions, but I would argue in the case of the DE students, because of the shortened time frame for adjustment, it was a heightened experience. Direct entrant students need a structured programme of support that is not remedial but emphasises what is transferable from their previous learning. Institutions need to endeavour to find out more about what learning experiences students have had so that the emphasis is on what can be used rather than what is lacking.

The participants in my study had experienced peer assisted learning interventions in a formal manner in a skills-based module in their first year (direct entrants did not have this) and in an informal manner in the form of MATES. It is clear that these interventions helped to establish collaborative working practices amongst the participants in my study and that these were beneficial. Direct entrant international students enter in a year where typically the scaffolding put in place to support year one students is removed. The fact that they had not benefitted from the scaffolding in year one and in particular the peer-assisted learning

interventions, alongside the fact that their continuing peer group had and so had already formed working partnerships, meant that the direct entrant students found it doubly difficult to establish these working relationships outside their own mono-cultural groups. The students in my study were benefitting from an informal intervention in the form of the MATEs project, which was in its first year in the first year of my study and many of them said that during the MATEs meetings was the only time in the week when they talked to UK students.

The international students for the most part say that this is the only real time they get to speak with UK students. They find it hard to establish friendships with UK students and blame language and cultural differences for this. They are confident that as their language skills improve they will be able to make friends. They also feel that as they have only been in the UK for 4 to 5 months it is early days and that maybe next academic year they will be able to consolidate and build on this years' experience both in terms of language skills, making friends and their academic studies. The MATEs find the project useful as they are enjoying the experience of talking to international students and learning about their country and life at home. They also find the process of what has really become peer tutoring beneficial as it helps to consolidate their own learning.

By third year this had changed. It seems that formal interventions that facilitated intercultural interventions helped to break the ice and support the students in the initial stages where they negotiated working relationships across cultures. In peer assisted learning programmes it is important that we do not forget the specific needs of direct entrant students.

The experience of the direct entrant students in this study was squeezed and they were in the UK for 2 years how much more so then is the experience of top-up students? The trend appears to be for increasing numbers of top-up students not just at my institution but across the sector. According to HEFCE figures top-up students now account for a 1/3 of international recruitment in the UK (HEFCE, 2016). There appears to be a downward trend overall in terms of international student recruitment however, DE and top-up students it would seem are filling the gap. There is therefore an imperative to better understand their particular experience with a view to improving student satisfaction and achievement.

Second year experience

- The second year of study was characterised by a changing social dynamic that resulted from the joining of the direct entrant students. Thus the second year was about working out who to work with in order to achieve the best outcome.

The arrival of the direct entrant students marks a change in the social dynamic of the students and they are integrated into established social groups. These shifting social dynamics are a major characteristic of the second year experience for these particular students. These negotiations are not easy as the direct entrants are an already established social group trying to enter into another already established group. Initially there is little interaction. What changes this is the challenge of the course and the need to learn from one another as tutor support and scaffolding of learning is strategically removed in order to encourage independence in learning. The second year for these students is a process of discovery about themselves and others as learners and peer-supporters. Peer-learning and group learning activities are fraught with difficulty and there is still need to learn about how we can best provide, facilitate and support these processes. It seems that these students sought out others who they felt could help them learn and so perhaps intercultural working relationships could be encouraged by emphasising the need to learn from one another through explicitly incorporating students' varied prior learning and experiences into learning and assessment.

Criticality and independence in learning

- The students had a practical conceptualisation of critical thinking, in that they articulated their understanding of this concept in terms of reading, research, writing and the construction of citation based arguments within their assignment.
- There was a move from reliance on the tutor as the bestower of knowledge to a collaborative construction of knowledge.

In terms of developing independence in their learning and a critical stance to knowledge the students learned to share the burden of the challenge of the course and to look to other sources than the teacher for answers and thus to answer the question themselves. But this took time. The production of lengthy citation-based discursive essays, especially under timed conditions, as training for critical independent thinking seems to be a laborious and time consuming method to teach the skill. Do our students need to be able to produce lengthy, citation-based written examples of their critical thinking skills? Will they ever be asked to do this in the work place unless they choose a career in academia? Can we assess and teach this skill in other ways? We are moving towards other assessment strategies,

presentations, posters, video, portfolios both investment and reflective, collaborative reports, but are a long way from abandoning the essay and the exam.

Assessment was a topic that took a lot of the students' attention and much of what they said in relation to their skills and confidence development was related to how they performed in exams. For many of the international students the main complaint was the essay exam as it presents a particular challenge to second language learners who may not have the language ability to think quickly enough in the second language in order to produce effective writing about a subject under timed conditions. In these situations they resorted to trying to memorise whole essays, paragraphs and sentence structures to regurgitate during the exam. So for them the assessment became not about relating what they knew about a subject in a structured response to a specific question but a repetition of a learned response to what they hoped might be the question. It was as much about memorising vocabulary and grammar as it was about the subject. The UK students did not have to do this as they had the language skills to write around a number of memorised key subject related points. The cognitive load these two groups of students experienced in the exam room was not the same. Unsurprisingly the international students compared their exam performance to their UK peers but this focused on quantity; they saw that under timed conditions the UK students were able to write a lot more than them. This would suggest that we need to rethink our assessment strategies. It is not a matter of making assessment easier but fairer and more relevant to the skills that students actually need in the work place.

Critical thinking and the development of self-directed learning skills is a process of maturation, of changing how you think about knowledge, its creation and who owns it. This was a process shared by my participants across all cultural groups. The questions we need to ask are how we can make clear our expectations about the negotiation of knowledge, where knowledge resides and how students participate in that process. CT is also about students developing confidence in themselves, as individuals, and as learners, and in their subject and their skills. How do we better build that confidence? The students in my study seemed to gain this confidence from one another.

Perhaps Chiu and Cowan (2012) are correct when they suggest that CT should not be called CT; they suggest reasoned thinking. But if we ask what CT is for and answer as Martin (1992) does that it has a moral impetus to create better thinkers for the good of all of us then perhaps its title should be ethical reasoning. If we also consider that this form of thinking is for the betterment of society locally and globally then we should add in an aspect of interconnectedness and intercultural relationships, therefore the goal of HE should be to create students who are capable of global ethical reasoning. So CT becomes a process of looking at an issue and asking the question: how can we make this better for everyone?

The students' practical conception of CT makes it readily translated to a skills-based articulation. Embedded academic skills teaching gives the teaching of CT both subject specialist relevance for the students both also moves its articulation closer to the students' own practical conceptualisation of CT and their skills based imperative for learning how to use CT in their assessments.

Development of transformative study methods

- The students' learning experience was transformative in terms of their skills development.

Skills development took place within subject for the students in my study through constructive dialogue and shared practice. This again relates back to peer assisted learning where skills-based practice could be usefully shared amongst peers in a more formal way so students are encouraged to share their working practices as well as their subject knowledge. Again this is a confidence issue, being confident to reveal weaknesses to others and to try new ways of doing things and abandoning old practices necessitates self-awareness and assessment of skills and strength. This took place between these students in a non-judgemental manner and a low jeopardy situation in this study, whereas much of the interventions we employ as educationalists put students in situations where they are assessed and so judged, and there is high jeopardy. Again, there are examples of peer-assisted learning programmes across the UK where students act as academic skills tutors sharing their skills-based practice with more novice students. This however, almost always takes place outside of the main learning sphere, in libraries, skills centres, study centres etc. The status of skills needs to be raised in the classroom. Subject specific tutor endorsement

and facilitation of the sharing of skills practice legitimises and values this as an integral element of subject learning.

Unlike Ritz's (2010) study which found that the constructive dialogue required for transformative learning to take place did not happen between students, in my study there were frequent and substantial examples of such interactions. The students talked extensively about the methods they used to study and how they had adapted them in response to the ideas of their peers and tutor feedback. They moved from being tutor dependent, reliant on course notes, set texts, lectures and seminars for the knowledge requirements, to going out and finding the information for themselves and being able to see how to construct answers to questions using their acquired knowledge. These skills in themselves are transformative as they enable future self-directed learning experiences.

Poetic representation of research

The multiplicity of meaning and the layers and folds of the research story that alternative forms of representation provide may enable educational research 'to produce [the] new knowledge in the field' for which Gallagher (2011, p. 51) calls. Conceivably we have to write 'messy' texts if we are to have a hope of understanding the messiness of human life. We also need to explore the ways in which we can represent data and the voices of others that are honest, authentic and meaningful. We cannot claim to have represented, untouched, the voices of others leaving them somehow to speak for themselves. Poetry makes the representation of data a personal process of meaning making. But it also transcends the individual evoking the experience of the participants, making explicit the researcher's influence whilst also encompassing the many co-collaborators in its production including that of the reader. It must be acknowledged, that although polyvalent readings of the text are a possibility they are not guaranteed, however the indeterminacy of such texts encourages such readings. Thus poetic representation makes space for multiple voices, layers of stories and multiple interpretations in a non-hierarchical manner. Here the direct juxtaposition of the data with literature in poetic form serves to produce a direct conversation between the participants and academia. These juxtapositions create an emphasis highlighting for the reader the experiences of the participants creating insights

and extending our knowledge. It also serves to give the participants' voices equality in that process of knowledge making.

Conducting this research has been a personal journey of discovery. I have learnt about the student experience, travelled alongside the participants and been allowed a view that we do not always have as teachers. The personal study space of the student was opened up to me, as was their emotional response to the experiences they had. I teach students on a one-to-one basis and so I am not claiming I have never seen the personal side of what the educational experiences means for students; the emotional impact. I have, often. But this study allowed me to build a more sustained, gradual closeness with the students; some more than others. I have an understanding of what it is to study a new subject, to put yourself in a place which challenges you and pushes you out of your comfort zone. I also understand the personal triumphs of the successes of study; good grades, but also a sense of personal achievement and enhancement. But I have not studied abroad and so do not have personal experience of what that means. This study has given me more insight into what that means and a greater ability to sympathise with the international student position. I also have a more student-centred appreciation of the changing dynamics of relationships on UK HE campuses. The potential to provide international experiences for all students is greatly enhanced by the presence of international students. My working role is positively informed by this greater capacity for empathy and understanding.

The insight I have gained influences how I contribute to projects to create peer tutoring schemes, which I now see as being fundamental to the development of mutually-supportive, skills as well as subject-knowledge focussed, communities of practice, and I feel must have a cross-cultural element to be effective in the fostering of intercultural relationships and learning. As I contribute to various committees and working parties I stress an emphasis on internationalisation for all and a focus on how we facilitate intercultural awareness and global citizenship.

Limitations

How these students used their new found skills, confidence, self-directed learning abilities in future learning contexts and how they felt this UK HE experience informed their future learning would be interesting to know. It is sometimes only with hindsight that one realises

the true impact and import of present experiences. Some of the participants in my study went on to complete masters programmes, their experiences there and how they were informed by their UG studies would be interesting. Assessing the long term impact of their UG experience especially in terms of the transformative nature of their skills development would be interesting. The impact that the students' experiences had on their future working lives would also be interesting to explore.

The direct entrant students in my study were in the UK for two years; however, there are many students who come to the UK for only one year as direct entrants on to the final year of an UG programme or as masters students. Understanding how the issues that direct entrant student experience is impacted by shortened sojourns in the UK would be fruitful if we are to better support these students' learning experience.

This study touched on the concept of identity – the students talked of 'growing up' and of having an international experience. What does that mean for the future for them? What does it mean when they return home? Mei talked about the quandary she faced on her return home in terms of who she now believed she was and the person her parents and society expected her to be. What happens when cultures collide in a new 'third space', what happens to that person when they go back? These issues are beyond this thesis but point to interesting directions for research in terms of global identities, crossing borders and boundaries and gender studies.

In this thesis I have explored the way in which research can be done; there are many possibilities in this regard and much that can be done to expand the ways in which knowledge is created. This is fruitful exploration and much more can be done here.

We cannot know fully what others are thinking and feeling. We cannot fully represent an experience, either our own or another's. We cannot know how our representations will be read, understood and interpreted. We can only acknowledge the assumptions, values and positions that influence our research if we are aware of them. All of these issues limit my research but also open up possibilities for research if we acknowledge what we cannot do as researchers. In this acknowledgement of the limits of our capabilities is the space for other interpretations, readings and possible ways of seeing and understanding. Fixed notions of

knowledge, truth and meaning reduce possibilities, whereas uncertainty allows for possibilities.

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Post-script

The participants

UK male – Hasan

Chinese female – Li

Pakistani male – Rashid

Chinese male – Huan

UK male – Wasim

Chinese female – Mei

Saudi female – Nadia

UK male – Afzal

Saudi male – Hakim

Chinese female – Ai

Chinese male – Hai

Chinese male – Cheung

Chinese male – Ru

Chinese female – Ju

Individual stories

Hasan

I started working part time when I was at xxxxxxxxx uni and then I dropped out and I worked for a couple of years. I was job hopping, going from call centre to call centre. I did that for a bit and then I started thinking about going to Uni again and just came back last year.

My parents didn't go to university my father came from Pakistan and married my mother, she was born here. She went to school and college and then she got married. Then when I was eleven years old my father passed away, so after that studying was very important because it was the only option. Some people may have another option; maybe carry on the family business or something like that. But my mum drove it into us that you can do what you want, you don't have to become a doctor or anything like that, but make sure you go to Uni and make sure you study hard.

Li

I'm enjoying it at xxxxxxxxxxxx; it's so different, it's so different from China and I like the courses, studies, tutors and the way tutor teaches; the way to study is different from China. In China the tutor will teach you all of the knowledge you need to use in your major and in the UK the tutor won't always tell you the ways and you have to find a good way to do your work. Here he will give you a guide, not give you a method and the numbers and the final answer and I think in UK one question has several answers and if you think your answer is good it's ok, but in China they only have one (laughs) you must do it the way the teacher likes best.

I came to the UK because I am on the two plus two programme. The first year is in China and the final year and the second year is in the UK. The tutor and the International Office contacted our University and about fifteen students came to xxxxxxxxxxxx, several are doing a masters degree, only two or three people are doing the second and final years. When I started my degree in china it wasn't really my plan to come to the UK but I have a friend in the last year I know and I got an opportunity to come to the UK. It's the second time my University has done this programme, so I knew about it from the first time and so I prepared and planned to just have the opportunity and I passed the exam, so I came to England (laughs).

In China, after senior school we all have a big exam, all of the country's students should pass the exam. If your mark makes the level that the University sets you can go to that University. In China the universities are graded as level A and level B. Level A Universities are the ones students are more likely to choose and level B ones are not so popular.

My parents did go to university. My mother is an accountant, this is my major, and my father is in financial management. They both trained on the job.

I think accountancy in the UK is so different from in China, because in the first year in China I studied in Chinese and I studied Chinese accountancy, not like Melody or Lisa in xxx, they studied modules like the UK. It is my first time here and I looked at the books and final exam papers and I was so nervous. The course is so difficult and so different, it's so different (laughs) and so difficult.

Rashid

In Pakistan I was taught in English and I spoke Urdu at home. We learn English from the very first year, like in nursery. English, like A, B, C, starts from there. So English is compulsory in every year. The education system is similar to here, we have GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education) and the certificate I did, which is called the Standard School Certificate; it's equivalent to O Levels (Ordinary Level). So there are two systems there. For A Levels (Advanced Level) we have a Higher Standard School Certificate, which you do at college.

My parents didn't go to university. My elder sister was the first in my immediate family to go to university; she's a pharmacist now. She did a pre-pharmacy course in Pakistan. She's married now and she's going to the US. But one of my aunts did an MBA (Master of Business Administration) in Finance in London. And my uncle has a job in London. I don't know what degree he did but he did his Masters here. Another relative did his masters in Leeds as well. But different people can be good at a lot of things. My mum and dad didn't do professional degrees, but my father's got a construction company. He did like some bachelors of arts then after that he went to work in surveying, you know, like the people who do road surveys and stuff like that. He did engineering or something like that there and then after that he ran my grandfather's construction company. We used to have a lot of people in our family in the construction company, but now my father is the only one. In xxxxxxxxxxxx everyone is doing other things. No-one wants to go into the family business anymore, but I might do.

After I completed my A levels I went to University in Pakistan. I started my BIT - Bachelors in Information Technology, then after the first semester my uncle told me I should apply to do a degree in the UK because it's got a better reputation. Our Uni there didn't have a very good reputation. So I applied at the end of the first semester and got a visa in seven or eight days.

I came to the UK in the March of 2008. I had applied to do a Certified Accountancy Technicians course and I did three modules of that. I lived in London. It was hard; it was quite a fast life there. I got a part-time job, but it was hard because my college was in Central London near Tower Bridge, it was Barrow High Street, so I had to travel about an hour. Then my uncle, who lived up here, said I should come here and I was alone in London, so I came here and applied to the University. They said I had to do the International Foundation first, so I did and I passed with 61% and then I got a place on the degree.

Huan

My major reasons for coming to the UK were to continue my studies. Before I came to the UK I prepared for two years. I studied at the xxxx-xxxxxxx College and in fact during those two years I learned some English as my major course. I had a full timetable of study in year one and I learnt English well and had a bridge to transfer me from China to the UK. So I chose to come to the UK, I chose to come to xxxxxxxxxxxx. Secondly, I think coming to the UK can teach me how to learn and study independently. I can learn to deal with my own issues, such as cooking for myself, clothing and to deal with some things you never expect to happen, but you have to face in real life. I also could choose to study one year here and then do my final year in China but I chose to do two years here because I think I can get some living experiences, some benefits if I faced these problems. I have the opportunity to improve myself, enhance myself.

I have made a lot of friends in the UK; they are all very friendly and helpful.

Going to university was not a big decision, it was a quick decision. I had a long history of wanting to come to the UK. Since middle school I had a dream to one day go to the UK and do some studying.

I failed a grading exam in China and my mother suggested I go to the xxx to make my life there and then I could go to the UK. At that time my family didn't have any money to help me to come to the UK, but we have a plan for our family to get better and better and my parents are making more and more money every year. So we decided we had to undertake the risk if I decided to go to UK. I think that if a person wants to be famous he or she should do something different from the general people and have a wonderful life. So in the summer we decided, it was a quick decision. My mother made the suggestion and I said, "Good, good I will go if you allow". So we didn't think about this too much, about the other factors, we just said go there.

Wasim

I'm from xxxxxxxxxxxx. After college, university was just the next step to be honest, it's not like there's much choice, it's just University is what you do after college. My parents didn't go to university, one uncle did but apart from that mine is the first generation of my family to go.

My first year here went pretty well. I got a 1st and so it was alright. There were no real ups and downs, it was just like college to be honest, just I had a bit more free time and the work was a bit easier as well. The lecturers teach like the tutors at college except for a few who don't teach very well to be honest. Their lectures are a bit hard to actually pay attention to because they are just that boring. The main difference between college and university is the lectures. In college it was just all classrooms. Lectures are pretty boring as well to be fair and the lecture halls are too big as well, so you can just sit at the back and mess around and no one else cares, so you don't feel a need to pay attention.

Mei

I like it here. I am a little homesick but everything is fine

My parents went to university, my father is an engineer and my mother is a German teacher. So it was expected that I would go to university too. My father went to America to do his masters and my mother went to Germany to do hers, so they think that studying abroad is a very good way. My grandparents went to university so they wanted my parents to go too. My grandfather also came to the UK to finish his education. So I was encouraged to go to university and to come to the UK but I wanted to do it, it would be boring if I didn't. But the subject is not what I wanted to do. When I chose my modules I had no choice to choose other subjects, because you know in China people are divided into two parts when they are in high school. One group of students learn sciences and all the things about maths. Other people like me, we learn like English, Chinese and maybe literature and you know when we go to Universities we can chose either sciences or accounting, language and the other things. But when I was young I wanted to be a doctor, but my maths is very poor so I had no choice to learn about sciences. It is more difficult to go to university in China than here but it is cheap and the government help us pay and they give money to schools and the schools give us a low price. It's no different from UK, all the monetary system is school run so they can decide the low price or the high price.

Nadia

I studied for a diploma in my own country and then came here to do a degree. My father encouraged me to come to the UK and our government supports us. The Saudi government wants to send a lot of students abroad; they want to change the system, so they send us in England and America or other places. I was one of the students who got high marks on my diploma so they gave me the offer to study abroad and so I prepared to go abroad. My father is a professor at a university in my country. It was natural for me to go to university; 95% of the students study at University, because it's free in our country. It's free to go to University and they give us a salary every month and they support students to complete their studies. Even when we are here the governments pays our fees and gives us a salary.

I'm not enjoying the degree. It's different between our country and here and we were shocked when we came here. There is no care, there is no nothing. They promised when they gave us the acceptance letter that they would help us, because we are direct entrants into the second year. But when we came here we were just lost, there was no one with us. We talked to the course leader and he said, "Okay give me any questions, specific questions". But how can we know what to ask? He should explain to us because you sent the letter accepting us, and you accepted us as direct entry students and you know what the problems are with direct entry students. So that's it, we just try and try to be like the students more, but it's hard for us.

Afzal

I really like it at xxxxxxxxxxxx. I went to the University of xxxxxxxxxxxx and I didn't like it there. I couldn't find my classes, one class would be at one building and it could be a bank, it could be anything really. Then you would have to go somewhere else, to another building and it's in the city as well. I like it here, you are far away from those things really. I know people want to be in the city, but it's not really for me. You have to park far away and take a bus to the Uni. I suppose there's more going on in a city but then again there are more distractions.

Before uni I did A levels and then someone told me to do AAT (Association of Accounting Technicians), which is like a technician diploma type thing and I thought if I don't pass at Uni, then I will have that as a backup. So I did AAT and that took me three years. It's like level one, level two and level three and after three years then you get a diploma. That's at college; it's like a BTEC (Business and Technician Education Council) thing. It's the equivalent to HND or C or something like that. After that I thought I might as well come to Uni now. I decided to go to uni to just like to get ahead. I know a lot of people who are in the accountancy practice and they are not too happy with it because they don't actually do what they thought they would be doing, they are just making small accounts and they are not at the big scene really. I would rather do more of management and to do management you need a degree and that's really where I want to get to be. I have worked part-time as an accounts assistant and I didn't really enjoy it because you have to do a lot of entries in log books and I thought I'd rather do management.

Hakim

I'm not enjoying university here. I came here because I couldn't complete my study from diploma to bachelor degree in my country. So I decided to come here because I got the chance to complete my studies here. Also I could do English language, because when I was in my country I didn't know anything about English language and I didn't have this language, but now I try to learn when I study in the Uni here. I think I didn't take enough time to study my English, I studied for just one year and the college which sent me here didn't give me any chance to study English for more than one year. I didn't do an IELTS (International English Language Test System) test because I studied in the International Study Centre here, so they gave me exam and they told me when you pass this exam you can enter without IELTS. I studied at the study centre for one year. It wasn't much of a preparation for the degree; we only started to learn about how to do assignments in the last month there. So we spent just one month studying about the structure of essays, how to write essays and I don't think that was enough.

On my first day in the UK I felt lost because when I came here I didn't know anything about English, even the letters of the English alphabet, I had no idea about anything. For the first two months here I was like someone who is lost and I didn't know what anyone was talking about. I didn't start to understand English until I had been studying here for four months, so actually I didn't study here for a year. I mean if you ask me about that time I can say that for

five months I studied English, because the first three months I had no idea about English. Also this is first time I have travelled to another country from Saudi Arabia.

Ai

I come from Hunan Province. I live in a city. It's very different from here. I went to university in Shanghai and lived in the dorms.

My father went to university he studied financial taxation and so did my mother. My grandfather was a doctor and my grandmother was a teacher. In school I wanted to be a lawyer and then I changed my mind and decided to become an accountant. Boys and girls are treated the same now in China but in the past they always said boys were better than girls. Boys need to work and girls need to stay at home and do housework not homework. It has changed now, but some people always think like that, a little.

I think that studying abroad was a chance to practise my English and finish my degree. When I graduate and then go home, compared to other people, I will do better. It will be easier to get a job but this is not a very important reason; I can also improve myself. Maybe you study in China for University and just need to pass the exam and when you graduate maybe you think you didn't learn anything. So I think studying here is better. Studying here, it's another experience.

Hai

I am from Hunan Province in China. I studied at the xxxx-xxxxxxx College which is located in Shanghai. I came to the UK to study because when I studied at High School I did not get an offer from a good University. So I chose to go overseas to study, but at that time my English was not good so my friends told me about this Shanghai University, the xxxx-xxxxxxx place and I went to Shanghai and saw the College was not bad, so I decided to go there to study. The students at this college must go to the UK. Another thing is that my parents wanted me to go to the UK to study, because my sister also studied in the UK.

My father went to university. He is a financial director. My mum has no job. She looks after the family.

Cheung

I like xxxxxxxxxxxx. This town is very peaceful and people's lives are different from China. I'm from Shanghai and Shanghai is busy.

I came here to study because firstly, I want to develop my English and the second reason is I want to further my accounting because in Britain the accounting is maybe the leader in the world. They have a high reputation in your country. I want to be an accountant in the future. I see this as a good job, as my father and my mother want me to have a consistent salary. My parents both went to university so they expected me to go too but that is okay because I was happy to do that.

This is the first time I have lived away from my parents and had to do everything for myself. I maybe wasn't ready as it was a long way from China and it was a bit of a shock, but I think this is good for me and it's exciting. I think Chinese students may be different from other foreign students; foreign students may be more independent. Chinese students maybe rely on their parents.

Ru

I come from Shang Yu which is between Beijing and Shanghai. Both my parents went to university, my father studied Finance and my mother studied Accountancy and that influenced me to do Accountancy too. My Grandfather went to university and worked in the police and my grandmother was a housewife.

I went to university in Beijing and I lived away from home in university accommodation. I have travelled for holidays in China and to Singapore. I came to the UK to learn English first but also to experience a different country and to travel around Europe.

Ju

I am from Shanghai which is a big city and there are many people. I came to the UK to study because my parents encouraged me to experience different lifestyles and countries and when I was in China I really wanted to go abroad to see different cultures and different people and a different way of living. This is the first time I have travelled outside of China. My father graduated not from the University of Shanghai, but it's like a college and he majored in agriculture. My mother did not graduate from University. When she finished High School she did not go on to learn at university and now works in my father's company. She also looks after the home and she takes good care of my father and me. In xxxxxxxxxxxx I have a lot more freedom and there's more interesting things to do. This is my first time living away from home. I like xxxxxxxxxxxx because it is not a city, there's more nature and it's not so crowded.

Grades/outcomes

Participants' results June 2013

Hasan - ORD

Li – 2:2

Rashid – 2:2

Huan – withdrew

Wasim – 2:1

Mei - 3rd

Nadia – withdrew

Afzal – 3rd

Hakim – 3rd

Ai – 2:2

Hai – 2:2

Cheung – 2:2

Ru - withdrew

Ju – 3rd

What now?

While I am young I want to go to different places,

To see different places while I can.

I am afraid to have children

In China you should be working for your children for your whole life.

Maybe I'll teach

Put something back.

Ice-breaker questions used in sessions one, two and three to stimulate discussion

What do the following words mean to you?

UK

University

Course

Describe your 1st week here at university.

Describe a typical week at university now.

Study

What was doing your first assignment like?

What was doing your most recent assignment like?

Challenges

Have you experienced any challenges on your course?

Appendix 1

Poetry Worked Example

Original text

The problem with writing is.....

Mei – We didn't understand very clearly what question two means.

Rashid – It says discuss why a statement of cash flow may be more useful and reliable than a statement of comprehensive income to become companies. So between statements of cash flow and statements of comprehensive income we have to conclude which one is better, we need to prove which one is better and compare them, yeah?

Ru – This means people have different ideas?

Rashid – Different ideas, yeah; but whatever you think you have to prove with your points and definitions.

Al – It means everyone has different conclusions; the teacher just looks at your reasons so you have to say.....

Mei – ... enough reasons to support your idea.

Rashid – Yes, you have to define both of them and discuss that because that statement shows that sort of thing it is better.

Mei – You discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the two statements and which is better?

Rashid – Yeah.

Al – Oh, so we don't all have the same answers, everybody has different answers. Maybe I will write I think this one is better and maybe other people will write...

Rashid – Yeah, it depends.

Mei – Just, you need to have enough reasons to support it.

Together – Ahh!

Rashid – Yeah, that's it.

Mei – It's so hard to write

theme – Writing

Discuss

Discusses
This means people have different ideas?
Different ideas, but prove your point
Everyone has different conclusions.
The teacher looks at your reasons so you have to say
Enough reasons to support your idea.
So we don't all have the same answers?
Everybody has different answers.
Maybe I will write I think this one is better and maybe other people will write.
Just, you need to have enough reasons to support it

Field Notes

Clarity is needed in assignment questions
Language of instruction an unspoken part of UK educational culture but perhaps the expectations remain implicit. Mei – I started the question at I used Google, but it's hard to write essays because some words make you very confused

Work moment in the process of writing skills development. A sudden realisation that knowledge is negotiated. This marks a significant moment in the journey for these students that sees them move away from a reliance on text books and the tutor's perspective skills for answers to a synthesis in their reading and writing of a range of perspective and opinions in the formulation of their responses to assignment questions and in their building of understanding of their subject.

Final poem

Discuss

This means people have different ideas?
Different ideas, but prove your point
Everyone has different conclusions.
The teacher looks at your reasons so you have to say
Enough reasons to support your idea.
So we don't all have the same answers?
Everybody has different answers.
Maybe I will write I think this one is better and maybe other people will write.
Just, you need to have enough reasons to support it.

Al

The final poem is little changed, in this particular example from the original discussion and the interim version. Only the inclusion of question mark and... But most significantly the inclusion of the Al! Which was said in unison and in the original moment signified a moment of realisation.

The students had a practical conceptualisation of critical thinking, in that they articulated their understanding of this concept in terms of the things they had to do to achieve in within their assessments.

There was a move from reliance on the tutor as the bestower of knowledge to a collaborative construction of knowledge.

Skills were adapted, refined and shared in multiple communities of practice within a landscape of learning.

The students' learning experience was transformative in terms of their skills development.

Poetry Worked Example

Intercultural Communication

Data

Mei - I took the same route to uni. Most of us knew each other in China before we came, so we came over together. But it still had become very different and because our English is not good it is hard to make friends.

Al - Most students from China are very friendly because it is our language it is the same so it is simple to communicate.

Liang - I don't talk to UK students much. Just once in a company, like a boy sat beside me and he asked me where I was from, I said, "China" and he said, "Are you very rich?" He thought all Chinese people are very rich, but I said, "No". He asked me why Chinese families just have one child. I think in China most families just have one child but in the UK and other countries they have several children.

Huan - My friends are Chinese, UK and other international students. My idea is to make friends with students from different countries each other's culture, that is an international environment. We don't only want to make friends with Chinese students, we want to make friends with UK students and with people from other countries.

Hai - I came to the UK to see my friends. Making friends and communication is very important and travelling to increase your knowledge.

Liang - I don't talk to UK students much. Just once in a company, like a boy sat beside me and he asked me where I was from, I said, "China" and he said, "Are you very rich?" He thought all Chinese people are very rich, but I said, "No". He asked me why Chinese families just have one child. I think in China most families just have one child but in the UK and other countries they have several children.

Huan - So I am quite independent I suppose, but I do try to study with others because I believe that if you work with people who have a good work ethic it helps. If you hang round with people who are laid back and not called out then it gets to a point where nothing gets done by anyone. That's why I've spent a lot of time with international students; because a lot of students who were 18/19 when they started the course, whether they are Asian or black or white, I don't really mix with them because I try and get on with everyone, they are much more chilled out and they come to Uni for a social life.

Mei - When we first arrived here we were working in a very small group always with Chinese people and now we make up almost the class, the local people and we ask for the teacher's help, which is different from when we first came here.

Nadia - UK students don't like to be friendly with anyone but other UK students to be honest, but I study with international people, they help because they have the same feelings. We're stronger here, we came here to study, so they know how much we have to try and study. But until now I haven't talked to any English. English is the MATS project help. I can talk to Huan and Waim who are UK students but not other UK students, they do not make you welcome. This is the 2nd year for me in England, most of my friends are Japanese, Chinese or Pakistani, not English. It is harder joining the 2nd year of a course and to make friends. They're already in groups, they sit together and they talk together, they are groups from the 1st year.

Mei - I work with Chinese students because at the beginning the local students didn't want to work with us because the language is different and maybe they think I will not have enough points to do together with them. But that is changing now because we did some group presentations with some local students, and we have MATS meetings on Mondays and the UK students there want to work with us.

Mei - I think now we are one group and UK students usually help us it is very good we always ask them about questions and they help us. They are very friendly. It is friendly. Everyone is very friendly.

I think academically you learn a lot from Middle Eastern, Chinese, or just generally international students. I think in the UK we don't have mathematical ability, it's not that good compared to them. They can do maths and solve questions, for example, for my course, for accountancy they go quickly much more quickly than we can, where as they aren't that good at theory. We are obviously good at theory because our first language is English and so it's not a problem for us but it is for them. Me and my friends, we always do group study with international students, we can help them with theory and they can help us with numerical stuff so you gain from having the international students here.

Positive reactions to the presence of international students although this is related to their knowledge about the course, specifically maths rather than a desire to learn about them or their culture.

I think they are here I just can't imagine, apart from maybe a European country. I've never been to China and I don't know what it would be like, so, yeah, it would definitely be different and very scary too.

My modules everyone works together, everyone literally helps you another. It's like you get something you give something to someone. You can have one question from them and you can ask them the other one and that's the way it always been. I think the groups change, for example, you are doing a presentation as a group, then you have a different study group, then you have a different module presentation with a different group, so interaction was used from a sociological point of view as well just generally it is very good for professional life.

Ahsan/Mei/Al/Rashid - It is all of us together

Literature and notes

Numbers growing, building, increasing exponentially.

Money, marketing, recruitment drives (Pridels et al., 2007), changing faces, changing demands, needs yet.

Pedagogical strategies remain the same, the UK HE environment changed but continues on unchanging regarding (Montgomery, 2010) and so it is that many can still be followed from around the globe without benefiting from potential benefits of internationalization' (Montgomery, 2010, p.5) which as we know are many (see Brown's, 2009 extensive literature review).

Language, culture, satisfaction (Merrick, 2004), global currency, cultural currency, competence, confidence, UK and international - all.

This all depends on intercultural integration/relationships - these it would seem are few and far between.

We find it hard to accept that the other (Brown, 2009; Hyland et al., 2008; Merrick, 2004; Montgomery, 2009; Ramburath and Tan, 2009).

Why? International students expect to make friends through classroom contact (Merrick, 2004), there will be less of this than they are used to. Akhalabai participants from the north for UK students but not for others a barrier between (Merrick, 2004).

Language and culture make interaction difficult.

We assume to assume the nature of interaction with the 'cultural other' is the challenge and test for globalisation (Sanderson, 2004, p.7).

'It is about who we are and who they are' and what happens when they both meet.

It is about our world.

It is about how we and who they are, the collision and the struggle, the in-group and out-group, the cultural and the barrier, the familiar and the strange, the in-group and out-group, the North and the South, the West and the Rest' (Sanderson, 2004, p.7).

Family and foreigners, Native and exile, Friend and foe' (Zachary, 2000, p.278 cited in Sanderson, 2004), 'Us and them' (Said, 1995, p.43 cited in Sanderson, 2004), 'Insiders and outsiders' (Singh, 2002, p.5 cited in Sanderson, 2004), 'The West and the Rest' (Mabubun, 2002, p.13 cited in Sanderson, 2004), 'They are here', 'We aren't with the self' (Sanderson, 2004), 'One space', 'Academic engagement on an equal basis, 'We are all students together', 'One space', 'Not privileging of the host nation's 'knowledge and ethics' (Appadurai cited in Tim and Lowe, 2009, p.665), 'We help each other'.

When we talk students to work in intercultural groups we create potential problems (Brown, 2009; Montgomery, 2010; Traut and Hyland, 2011). We ask a lot when we assess these activities - the stakes are high.

Barrie started veterans of group work years others of the potential pitfalls.

These initial difficulties (Vale and Arif, 1998) can be overcome it seems (Montgomery, 2009) but it is difficult.

There is a separation of the different international groups stand together solidarity' (Tim and Lowe, 2009).

Does it have to be that way?

More formal interventions to create mixed groups can result in integration.

When the more chaotic the groups they have to work with.

Where students choose their groups it is more likely they will work with friends - not surprising but Ahsan and Huan and Rashid want to work with other international students and so does Mei - because they have a better work ethic, Mei UK students they say group work activities need to be managed carefully.

We need to be aware that perhaps such opportunities are not perceived as beneficial by all students.

Conversely, in an environment where internationalization was seen to explicitly provide all aspects of the university pushes such opportunities would be viewed more favourably. Hyland et al (2008) we need to create space for intercultural learning.

(Haigh, 2002, 2006 cited by Hyland et al, 2008) for home students lacking travel experiences, lacking course, 2006.

reflexive on UK students move away from the tendency to apply a deficit model to the international student (Leung, Peltier and Morley, 2003 cited in Hyland et al, 2008). Interestingly, the UK students who volunteered for my study were all British Asian, have some travel experience and are a couple of years older than the majority of their peers. These qualities perhaps make them distinct from their other UK peers and possibly informed their decision to volunteer to work with international students.

Poem

Intercultural Communication

We assume to assume
The nature of interaction with the 'cultural other'
Is the challenge and test for globalisation' (Sanderson, 2004, p.7)
It is about who we are
And who they are
And what happens when they both meet.
It is about our world
And what happens when they both collide.
It is about how we and who they are, the collision and the struggle, the in-group and out-group, the cultural and the barrier, the familiar and the strange, the in-group and out-group, the North and the South' (Sanderson, 2004, p.7).

Family and foreigners, Native and exile, Friend and foe' (Zachary, 2000, p.278 cited in Sanderson, 2004), 'Us and them' (Said, 1995, p.43 cited in Sanderson, 2004), 'Insiders and outsiders' (Singh, 2002, p.5 cited in Sanderson, 2004), 'The West and the Rest' (Mabubun, 2002, p.13 cited in Sanderson, 2004), 'They are here', 'We aren't with the self' (Sanderson, 2004), 'One space', 'Academic engagement on an equal basis, 'We are all students together', 'One space', 'Not privileging of the host nation's 'knowledge and ethics' (Appadurai cited in Tim and Lowe, 2009, p.665), 'We help each other'.

Reflective notes

An attempt to study abroad about 100 UK students consider this and here there is an example where an attempt was abandoned and an opportunity lost maybe more support was needed here. We need to look at how we can encourage and support more of this sort of thing so that the UK student population can benefit from study abroad experiences and are better prepared to compete in a global job market.

There is a strong sense of community learning coming from this group of students here Ahsan emphasises how they all help and learn from each other this includes international students and is contrary to much of the literature which suggests the groups are mono-cultural and isolated with little integration happening.

There has been developing integration. All students help each other this is a story of community, integration and intercultural learning and friendships.

For Rashid not having many fellow Pakistani students on the course has been an advantage he has had to make friends with students from other countries and has many UK friends. If you only work with people from your own country it makes you are disadvantaged as you will find it difficult to understand the way things are done here.

Rashid's impression is of a large international community of students and he has learnt from others and about other cultures.

