CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT
AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Academic exchange and interaction among Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong Chinese students
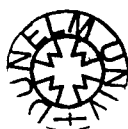
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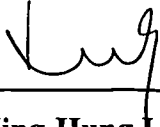
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DECLARATION

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

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ABSTRACT

In responding to the proposal made in Chief Executive's Policy Address 1998, 150 outstanding Mainland students were first introduced into the undergraduate programmes in the universities in Hong Kong annually in 1999. The aims of the exchange programme are threefold: to enrich the academic exchange, to build healthy competition between Mainland students and the Hong Kong counterparts, and to enhance the Hong Kong students' understanding of the Mainland. This study, thus, aims to investigate in what ways the three objectives mentioned above have been achieved after the first year's introduction of the scheme, how members of the two groups adjusted and interacted with each other. Through class observation, participant observations, and ethnographic interviews with 11 Mainland students and 15 of their Hong Kong counterparts at the Hong Kong Baptist University, the study attempts to examine the situation through the students' eyes, and more important, to unearth the underlying structure of their intercultural communication and cultural adjustment through an understanding of the story from both sides. As revealed by the findings, some academic exchange and healthy competition were noted among members of the two groups but to a very limited extent in a superficial way at the time when the study was conducted. The initial attempts have met with major intercultural communication barriers derived from shaky and superficial interpersonal relationships. Though the two groups did not report foremost adjustment problem in their everyday encounters, some important issues have been brought into sight between the lines of their responses. With the recommendations made based on the findings, it is hoped that institutions and student service professionals may become more sensitive to and aware of their needs so that appropriate strategies, activities and policies can be adopted accordingly. These will strengthen the intercultural communication and relationships between them, and ultimately accomplish more satisfactory academic exchange and competition between the two groups.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context of the Study

This study was launched in early 1999 when Hong Kong was under great pressure both internally and externally to improve its education in various aspects to meet the challenge of the 21st century. Internally, many calls for resolving the problems of Hong Kong education have been made by the community, educators, scholars, teachers, parents and even students. As more and more students were found losing their interest in study as they proceeded in school, the Education Department was eager to seek ways of motivating students at each level. Externally, the Department was facing the urge of reform to align with the educational changes made by other countries. To respond to the calls for education reform, the Education Department has carried out many policy changes at different levels of its educational settings, like the TOC (Target Oriented Curriculum) at primary level, and the NET (native English teachers scheme) at secondary level. At the tertiary level, more links between the institutions of Mainland and that of Hong Kong were set up, and exchange programmes were not only limited to postgraduate level as they used to be, but also to the undergraduate level. A group of mainland university students were introduced, for the first time, into the undergraduate studies in the local universities in Hong Kong. What also marked the exchange programme different is that the participants were not the ordinary students from Mainland, but a group of remarkable students admitted to prestigious universities in China. This exchange programme was initiated by the University Grants Committee as a trial scheme in response to what Mr Tung Chi Wah, the Chief Executive Officer of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, proposed in his Policy Address 1997 in which he claims,

Universities should be places for cross cultural learning and exchange. From
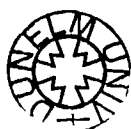
the next academic year, we will double the number for non-local undergraduates and taught postgraduates from 2% to 4% and increase the ratio of non-local research postgraduates from 20% to one-third. We have asked the institutions to recruit outstanding students from the Mainland to enroll in first-degree courses.

<div align="right">Chief Executive's Policy Address 1997, paragraph 95</div>

In the Policy Address 1998, Mr Tung further specifies that "......Starting from 1999-2000 academic year, the overall quota of a maximum of 580 first-year, non-local students will include 150 outstanding Mainland students." It is hoped that "the admission of non-local students facilitates the cross-fertilisation of skills and ideas, injects an element of healthy competition for local students and broadens our students' outlook on the Mainland and the region as a whole" (Tung, 1998, paragraph 103). Based on the same idea, the first cohort, eleven Mainland students originally admitted to Tsing Hua University in Beijing, China, were enrolled to the undergraduate programmes at the Hong Kong Baptist University in January 1999.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

What will be triggered when both the Hong Kong Chinese and the Mainland Chinese students were put in the same everyday class? Apparently they are all Chinese ethnically, yet they are Chinese who grew up in two totally different environments. What come along with them are not merely different dialects and dress, but an entire set of diverse and deep-rooted values, worldviews, and thinking that govern the way they judge, behave and interact with one another. Thus, how do members of the two groups adjust to the new learning environment? Will the outcomes of the scheme be as satisfactory as the Policy suggested? What may hinder or facilitate the achievement of the expected outcomes?

The purpose of this study is, therefore, threefold. It first attempts to explore the practical impact of the scheme on both the local students and the Mainland students. To be specific, it tries to answer in what ways each of the following aspects mentioned in the Policy Address 1998 will be fulfilled due to the admission of the Mainland students as seen from the students' point of view.

1. In what ways have the local students and the Tsing Hua students enriched their ideas and skills through this scheme?

2. In what ways has the "healthy competition" been established between the two groups?

3. In what ways have the local students' horizon on the Mainland been broadened?

Secondly, it aims to explore the communication and interaction between the two groups of students since this must be successful if the aims of the Policy speech are to be realized. As we know, education policies are often set to project an ideal outcome. It is true of the scheme in this study. However, what is not fully considered is that the achievement of the three desirable results mentioned in the Policy Address 1998 is subject to one key condition, that is the intercultural communication and relationship between the Tsing Hua students and their local counterparts. It is not until they build a close intercultural and interpersonal relationship that they will have more substantial communication that brings them the exchange of ideas, and skills, and helps to form a healthy competition. The second half of the study thus intends to examine the learning and cultural adjustment of both groups based on which the study further identifies the quality of the intercultural relationship and interpersonal communication between the two groups from the informants' own perspectives.

Research questions proposed thus include:

1. In what ways and to what extent the scheme has fulfilled its objectives as seen from the students' views?

2. How did the Mainland students as well as their Hong Kong counterparts adjust to the new learning and cultural environment?

3. What factors have facilitated and hindered the success of the scheme? To what extent they are related to the intercultural and interpersonal communication between the Mainland and the Hong Kong students?

1.3 Significance of the Study

Although the case investigated in this study is limited to the group at the Hong Kong Baptist University, it can mirror similar experience and outcomes derived from the same scheme carried out in other local universities of the same level. To a certain extent and in some aspects, the Mainland students and the local group also represent the one racial background but two cultural groups in the society. After the establishment of the "One Country and Two Systems", what followed are not simply "Two 'written' languages and three 'spoken' languages" (written Chinese and English, together with spoken Cantonese, Putonghua and English), but also one race and two cultures which is more crucial to the social development of the SAR (Special Administrative Region) Hong Kong. The language alone does not give one his identity, what really matters are the values, traditions, attitudes and experience embraced within one culture that accompanies one's growth and socialization.

Therefore, the significance of this study not only lies in the particular group of students involved, nor the individual university, but, more important, the general public at the cultural level. It is momentous in looking at not only the way

individuals relate to each other in the classroom and school setting, but also in general at the macro level in everyday life. This is worth-noting since how Hong Kong and Mainland can relate to each other is apparently a long-term issue of general education policy and general policy of all kinds. Therefore, firstly, this study can be an original contribution to understanding the nature of this process.

Secondly, in most studies on exchange students' cultural adjustment, the informants involved were students of two ethnicities with two distinct cultures like American and Chinese. Little has been discussed about the cultural adjustment of students of the same ethnic background but two living cultures. The exploration of the intercultural relationship and communication between the Hong Kong Chinese and the Mainland Chinese students in this study will, hence, add to the existing literature on exchange students' cultural adjustment.

Last but not least, large scale surveys were commonly and usually employed to collect data in studies in this field except for very few like Chen's recent study (1998). The present study, however, uses a case study in an attempt to capture the complexity of the understanding of the interaction and relationship among informants involved. The use of participant observation, class observation, and ethnographic interviews from two different channels in this study enables the complex investigation to be systematic and well grounded. The qualitative research methods of gathering and analyzing data used in this study will help to intensify the depth of the findings, and eventually the literature on the research methodology applied in the study of cultural adjustment and intercultural relationship in general.

1.4 Definition of Terms

1. According to Freed (1999:2), 'Study abroad' is a particularly American reference referring to "the combined study and living experiences that undergraduates, frequently but not always in their junior year, spend in an overseas context." Generally, 'study abroad' can be seen as "a period learning alongside native students at a foreign university". In the context of the present study, the terms 'abroad', 'overseas' and 'foreign' appear ambiguous mainly due to the political change of Hong Kong in 1997. Before the year of 1997, Chinese from Hong Kong were still regarded as 'overseas Chinese'. We often heard that those who have relatives in Hong Kong were considered to have 'overseas relations'. The Tsing Hua informants in the current study, therefore, can and cannot be regarded as studying abroad. Having said that, one cannot deny that practically Mainland and Hong Kong have gone through and are definitely under two systems in which people experience huge socio-economical, political and cultural difference.

2. Like the term 'culture', the word 'Chinese' could be a slippery term as well since it generalizes all the people with Chinese ethnic heritage. To avoid confusion and ambiguity, the term 'overseas Chinese students' in the present study refers to 'Chinese from Mainland China' differentiating from Chinese from other places around the world like Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

The following two limitations were found obvious, but inevitable in the present study:

1. The first limitation is the unbalanced academic level of the informants involved and that of their counterparts at the Hong Kong Baptist University. Since the

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Tsing Hua informants were convenient samples, they were the first and the only available group at the Hong Kong Baptist University where the researcher had access, the difference between them and their University counterparts became inevitable. What, thus, has to be stressed here is that the present study did not intend to contrast members of the two groups. The researcher actually would very much like to avoid comparing them for this is not why the Policy was set. Instead, the study means to examine in what ways and to what extent the scheme introduced has enhanced the intellectual exchange, fostered healthy competition, and helped the Hong Kong students to become more familiar with the Mainland, the mutual adjustment, and what is more, the interaction and communication among members of the two groups.

2. The second limitation is the timing of the present study. The Tsing Hua students arrived in mid-January, 1999 and brought the study to a start. The interviews concerning their adjustment to the new learning environment were conducted respectively three months and one year after their arrival. As the Tsing Hua informants had to spend their first semester doing some preparatory courses with their own group, the interviews about the interaction and communication between them and their Baptist counterparts were not carried out till a year after their arrival but one semester after they have entered their majors and studied together with their local counterparts. One may argue that if the local students have spent longer time with their Tsing Hua counterparts, they may have been affected more significantly. However, the initial responses from both groups have proved equally valid and useful as some follow-up 'friendly conversations' made at a later stage of the study showed not much difference. A continuous study two years after the local students interact with their Tsing Hua counterparts will certainly add more insight into the present study.

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1.6 Organization of the Study

To fulfill the aims set in Section 1.2, the present study will be organized in three parts with altogether nine chapters as follows:

Part I consists of the first three chapters introducing the background, the theoretical framework and the methodology applied in this study. To be specific, the present introductory chapter provides the context of study, explains the purpose, outlines the research questions, justifies its significance, defines the essential terms, and shows the organization of the study. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature to examine what is already known about similar studies on overseas Chinese students, the conceptual framework in regard to cultural adjustment and intercultural communication and the theories used to understand the data collected in the present study. By the end of this Chapter, the relevant literature will be outlined and the issues involved in this study will be refined and classified. Chapter 3 covers the origins and rationale of the methodology chosen, introduces the case and the key informants, discusses the important issues in applying an ethnographic approach like access, settings, informants, language, field relations, reflexivity, and what is more, the ethical issues involved. It also exemplifies how the data were collected, arranged and analyzed, in hope of illustrating the techniques of analysis before the data are presented and interpreted in the following chapters.

Part II encompasses Chapter 4 to Chapter 6 which detailed the analysis of data gathered from the present study in three major realms: Chapter 4 delves into impact of the present scheme on the Mainland exchange students and their Hong Kong counterparts, including their development of academic exchange, healthy competition, and the Hong Kong students' horizons on Mainland; Chapter 5

describes the adjustment experienced respectively by the Mainland exchange students and their Hong Kong counterparts, and Chapter 6 scrutinizes the various factors that hinder or facilitate the intercultural communication and relationship between the two groups and thus shape the outcomes of the present scheme.

Part III is concerned with the results of the findings and the study as a whole with Chapter 7 first summarising the major findings based on the data analysis in Part II and reaching some conclusions about the effectiveness of the scheme, Chapter 8 giving an in-depth discussion of the findings within the larger theoretical framework suggested in Chapter 2.3, and lastly Chapter 9 putting forwards plausible conclusions, implications of the study and recommendations for further research. At present, let's first take a close look at what have been sought in the field of Chinese studying abroad and its related issues.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Chapter 1 has provided us with the background of the present study, put forwards the goals, and in particular made the three research questions clear. Before we embark on our journey to seek answers for the three research questions, it is plausible for us to first move backwards to see what have been done in the related field. The purposes of the present chapter, thus, encompass three aspects: a brief review of Chinese students studying abroad and in Hong Kong, an examination of the studies concerning overseas Chinese students, and lastly the theoretical work on cultural adjustment and intercultural communication and what is most important, the theoretical framework intended to be used for the present study.

2.1 Chinese Students Studying Abroad

In this section, the following questions will be discussed:

> ➤ What is the early history of Chinese studying abroad?

> ➤ What were the nature and length of those overseas studies?

> ➤ What were the student exchanges between Mainland and Hong Kong like?

2.1.1 Early history of Chinese students studying abroad

The literature shows that the first Chinese students studying abroad can be traced back to the Tsing Dynasty, which began in 1636. Most of the early overseas students from China were studying in the seminary schools in different western countries. The first group of Chinese students studying in Italy, and actually in Europe in general, was the five students in a seminary school, named as "Chinese College" in 1724 (Dong, 1997). Later in 1817, Chinese students were also found studying in the "Overseas Seminary School" in the United States (ibid.). At that time, most of them were sent and sponsored by an individual church. It was not until 1872 that the

Government of Ching Dynasty officially sent the first batch of 30 Chinese youngsters to study in the United States, and almost twenty years later to Japan in 1896 (Dong, 1997; Huang, 1982). The origin of the self-funded Chinese students, however, is hard to confirm since an official record was not available from the government of that period.

2.1.2 Nature of Chinese students studying abroad

Like other student exchanges, Chinese students search their way out for various reasons characterizing the needs of different times depending on the specific context of the country. The early group sent by the Government often left in an attempt to learn from the West so that they could strengthen the country when they returned. According to Dong (1997), seven soldiers were sent to study in Germany to receive the new military training in 1876. A year later, another group of marines also crossed the ocean and reached Europe to acquire the key of western success (ibid.). Nowadays, Chinese students studying abroad exist in many more assorted forms. They range from an official group exchange or an informal short trip of experiencing life for a specific purpose between two countries or two institutions to a personal pursuit of a formal degree course that lasts as long as two to four years or as short as a three months' English enhancement programme. Instead of being initiated by the government, many institutions have started a range of student exchanges to enhance the collegiate academic and cultural exchange. Individually, many Chinese students decide to study abroad in order to accomplish their personal academic goals and expand their horizons. As the Chinese saying goes, "Reading ten thousand volumes of books is not as useful as traveling ten thousand miles."

In addition, the number of Chinese students studying abroad has dramatically

multiplied along the years. Among all the western countries, the United States is one of the most popular ones, which began its academic exchange after the normalization of diplomatic relations of the two countries in 1979 (Fingar & Reed, 1981). Since then thousands of Chinese students have flown over this dream land each year. The number has increased so spectacularly that the Chinese student-scholar populations were assumed to be the largest among all the international student populations in the United States (Lawrence, 1993; Orleans, 1988; Shaw, 1993). According to an on-going statistical investigation, as many as 270,000 Chinese students have flocked to study abroad up to 1998; among which 139,000 were self-funded (Li, 1998). The United Kingdom alone has received a total of 6,095 Chinese students respectively working on their postgraduate and undergraduate degrees in 1999 (Leon, 2000). This number is going to thrive since the Chinese government has announced that the number of students it sends abroad will be doubled by 2010 (ibid.).

2.1.3 Student exchanges between Mainland and Hong Kong

Compared with the large number of Mainland Chinese studying in various countries abroad, the number of Mainland students studying in Hong Kong is much smaller partly due to the relatively limited quota of entrance especially before the handover in 1997. Ironic as it may sound, one may find it harder for the Mainland Chinese to obtain entrance to Hong Kong than to the United States though Hong Kong is a part of China. That explains why Mainland students studying especially at the undergraduate level in universities in Hong Kong were not found in the past though Chinese studying abroad has a long history. Comparatively speaking, Mainland students working on their post-graduate degree were more common. We may easily come across Mainland scholars carrying out their research work for or with the local counterparts at the universities in Hong Kong. This kind of exchange usually lasts

from three months to three years or above subject to the availability of the research budget. However, this academic exchange often lies at the post-graduate level and is more research-oriented.

Because of the financial support and other available resources, Hong Kong students, conversely, enjoyed much more forms, freedom and opportunities to conduct their exchange activities in the Mainland than their Mainland counterparts. The universities in Hong Kong have long launched intellectual exchanges and short trip visits with their counterparts in Mainland. Though the local universities have not officially affiliated to certain universities in Mainland, they each are able to establish close relationship with quite a few Mainland universities, with whom they started visiting programmes, arranged academic staff members or research students to attach to different faculties in the Hong Kong tertiary institutions, organized short courses, conferences, and held joint research projects, exchange programmes and study tours. For example, regular summer trips (ten days to one month) will be held for the undergraduate students in each university in Hong Kong to have academic and cultural exchange at their associated institutions each year. More formal and long-term student exchanges to Mainland were also made by individual Hong Kong students. As China became more opened to the outside world, more Hong Kong students looked north. An increasing number of Hong Kong students went studying in Beijing and other inland cities in 1996, according to the State Education Commission (Xu, 1997). The students on the other shore, Mainland, however, did not have such a chance to pursue their undergraduate studies in Hong Kong until1999 after the proposal was made in Policy Address 1998. For the first time, a group of 150 Mainland students was enrolled in the undergraduate programmes in different universities in Hong Kong and arrived in early 1999 after their one

semester's preparatory courses in Beijing, China.

2.2 Studies on Chinese Students Studying Abroad

In this section, the following questions will be probed:

- ➤ What is the early history of studies on overseas Chinese students?

- ➤ What were the focuses and methods of those studies?

- ➤ What major findings were discovered?

2.2.1 Early history of studies on overseas Chinese students

Despite the profound history of Chinese studying abroad, systematic research in this field did not start till the early 1960s, and did not blossom till the early 1970s, following the trend of looking at the specific groups of international students in the development of general studies on this field. One of the most comprehensive overviews of this arena was included in Furnham and Bochner's work on culture shock (1986) in which they outlined the studies on international students in the thirty years from 1954 to 1984. A more recent work by Freed (1999) particularly gave an overview of studies on the linguistic impact of study abroad experiences, which has also been an important division of study in this field. Being examined from different perspectives in different disciplines, the field has drawn attention from investigators in education, anthropology, psychology, sociology, communication, and sociolinguistics. Though the nature and coverage of the studies on overseas Chinese studies were not as diverse as that of studies on international students, to facilitate the discussion, we may find it helpful to focus on the four major aspects of study, namely the core subject matter investigated, the target group(s) concerned, the context in which investigations took place, and the methods used to collect data.

2.2.2 Focuses and methods adopted in studies on overseas Chinese students

Having said that the studies of overseas Chinese students, especially the early ones, did not vary much, with the focus on the sociological and psychological perspectives, the core issues investigated have shown slight development. According to Furnham and Bochner (1986), an overwhelming discussion of the different mental health between the international students and that of the local students of the host country at tertiary level has dominated early studies on international students studying abroad in the 1950's. This trend, however, began to diminish among studies on overseas Chinese students. Unlike Bourne's (1975) work, fewer studies stressed the overseas Chinese students' mental illness caused by acculturation. Instead, the field took a further step by embracing the Chinese students' attitude and other particular problems Chinese students faced. Appleton (1970) and Chang (1972, 1973), for example, respectively conducted a survey and a case study on the values and attitudes of overseas Chinese college students. Others gave a more substantial and comprehensive survey study by examining the general background, characteristics, academic and community life, motivation, and attitudes of overseas Chinese who studied respectively in Korea, Japan, and the Philippines (Chang 1971; Huang 1982; and Reynolds 1970). Some like Fingar (1981) gave a factual data of overseas Chinese students. Responding to the particular context of particular period of time in China, by means of interview and survey investigation, studies on Chinese students abroad also turned its focus to the brain drain problem noted in China in the 1980's, which became more serious in 1990's (Deng, 1990; Orleans 1988; Zweig & Chen 1995). Conversely, Tinsman (1983) delved into the purposes and problems of the returned overseas Chinese students by examining some historical cases.

With the support of fundamental studies on the general aspects of overseas Chinese students, investigators in the late 1980s initiated their in-depth examination of the students' intercultural adaptation process, cultural difference and adjustment difficulties, and a range of comparison and contrast of the interwoven relationship between various variables found in the adjustment process. Upton (1989), for instance, made an attempt to illustrate the cultural confrontation and adjustment difficulties overseas Chinese students encountered in their daily life and academic studies by comparing and contrasting how the educational philosophies and organizations of China differed from those of the United States, which shaped the different expectations and cultural norms between local American and overseas Chinese students. Other comparative studies attempted to explore the cognitive and thinking styles of overseas Chinese and those of American university students (Huang, *et. al.* 1995). On the other side of the world, Jou and Fukada (1996) also started their extensive study on overseas Chinese students in Japan by evaluating the students' adjustment to a list of items on a scale to find out the effect of gender differences on emotional and academic performance, and the effect of length of residency and language proficiency on academic and socio-cultural adjustment. They also inquired into the kind of stress overseas Chinese students dealt with in Japan, compared the social support that Chinese students in Japan and their Japanese counterparts needed, with which they scrutinized the influences of social supports and personality on the adjustment of the Chinese students in Japan (ibid.). Others employed participant observation and interview to identify the particular nature of Chinese students' intercultural adaptation (Feng 1991) and the most consequential factors during this process (Zhong 1996). Huang (1997) added her concern about the English learning of the overseas Chinese in her recent publication on Chinese students and scholars in American higher education, while Sun and Chen (1997)

spotted the dimension of difficulties Mainland students faced in the process of adjustment to American culture.

Regarding the core subject studied, a closer look at the above review shows that considerable attention has been drawn to the extensive on-campus experience of overseas Chinese students, their attitudes towards the host country, and the adaptation problems they faced in the new environment. Another series of studies centered on the kind of dilemmas overseas Chinese students encountered, the ways and the process through which they adjusted to the host culture. Even with the later work on social support and intercultural adjustment, little is known about the interrelationship and intercultural communication between overseas Chinese students and their host group, though social and cultural adjustment is by all accounts a two-way process. Only Chen's recent work has made a breakthrough in this aspect (Chen, 1998). Through participant observations and in-depth interviewing of nine Mainland Chinese students at the post-graduate level over a year, she examined particularly the different perceptions and attitudes towards friendship between these Mainland Chinese students and their American counterparts, and illustrated the intercultural interpersonal relationships among them (ibid.).

What can also be noted is that the target group of the researches mentioned above has always been the overseas Chinese students excluding the perspective of the host group. How the students of the host country respond to the sojourners' presence and how they perceive their relationships and communication among each other usually received little attention, not to say the impact of the overseas Chinese students on their local peers. Even in the case when the hosts' attitudes towards the sojourners were touched, discussions were often non-empirical. For instance, Huang (1982)

once described how the Japanese people felt about the arrival of the Chinese students studying in Japan. Obviously, the adjustment that the home students may experience due to the exchange students' presence was neglected among the previous studies. Speaking of the contexts in which the above studies were situated, it is found that they all took place in a foreign place to the Chinese students, often in a totally different country. Mainland students studying in the same country, but a different place under a different social and political system among the same ethnic group, like the one in the present study, is a relatively unexplored area. Even less attention has been given to the Mainland students in the universities in Hong Kong, especially at the undergraduate level. In recent years, a booming study on the adjustment and intercultural relationship and communication between the Mainlanders and the westerner expatriates or Hong Kong Chinese expatriates doing their business in Mainland was found among the local literature on cultural adaptation (Selmer, 1996, 1997a, 1997b). The most current research efforts have focused on the psychological adaptation of newly arrived children and teenagers from Mainland China to the Hong Kong society from a social perspective (Lo, et al. 1999). Studies of similar kind, unfortunately, have been found very little in the education sector. Apparently, a need exists for research on the intercultural communication between the Mainland students and their Hong Kong counterparts at the tertiary level, and at other levels.

Among the previous empirical studies described above, another aspect that is worth noting is the methods applied to collect data. Quantitative research like large-scale questionnaire surveys were found widely used to collect general data among early studies. For example, Chang (1971) surveyed 155 overseas Chinese students in Korea. More qualitative research like Bourne's longitudinal study (1975) of interviewing Chinese students from two control groups over the four years of their

stay in the United States, was found once in a while, but not as common as it appeared in the later stage of the development in this field. Participant observation, one of the key tools in ethnographic studies, and more in-depth and open interviews were not well received till the 1990's. Yet, the number of subjects or informants of those studies were still very limited. For instance, Feng's data were mainly collected through participant observation, unstructured and semi-structured interviews with five informants (1991), while Zhong had three interviewees (1996), compared with Chen's nine in her recent study (1998). The growth of the methodological approach from a more quantitative to a more qualitative one proved to have opened the door to understanding the overseas Chinese students' experience and their intercultural relationship and communication with the host group in a more substantial way from more different perspectives.

2.2.3 Major findings of previous studies on overseas Chinese students

Considerable findings were brought to light with the previous studies on overseas Chinese students. Only some foremost and recurrent ones can be included here due to the limited room. By investigating the potential causes of a higher rate of mental illness found among students studying abroad, Bourne (1975) discovered that the Chinese students abroad tended to work harder and longer due to their parents' and personal high expectation. Looking at the difficulties the Chinese students faced, he also revealed that the male Chinese students were rather bashful, unconfident and socially passive with few friends, while their female counterparts were less isolated with more non-oriental friends though they felt guilty about dating them (ibid.). Also, having been brought up in a relatively closed environment in China, most Chinese students were first amazed at the modernization of other advanced countries like Japan and America. "Their first impression was the happy, exuberant

atmosphere and hopeful spirit of the people and the place" (Huang, 1982:89). Being in a foreign land, nonetheless, these students often experienced tremendous culture shock, from which they underwent surprise, excitement, anxiety, uncertainty, confusion, puzzle until they reached a certain level of assimilation. This process that always makes one reflect and involves certain changes could be found extremely difficult especially for those mature post-graduate students like some of those in Chen's study (1998). The causes of this difficulty largely lie in the inadequate language proficiency, the scarcity of cultural awareness and academic achievements (Sun & Chen 1997), and what is more important, lack of social support (Jou & Fukada 1996), and different expectation on interpersonal relationships (Chen 1998). Other than the difficulties just mentioned, financial difficulty is also another commonly identified adjustment anxiety (Feng 1991). However, as Chen concludes, through a process of reconsidering their own culture and tradition as compared with that of the host's, searching and remolding themselves, these overseas Chinese students all gained incredible improvement and growth (ibid.).

To carry on from where the previous studies were, the present study differs from them in four facets, namely the subject matter it discusses, the target group it focuses on, the context in which the study takes place and the methods it adopts to gather data. With the particular case examined in the present study, it attempts to fill the gaps of how the sojourners, Mainland students, and the host group, Hong Kong students, react to the changed learning and cultural environment at the university campus. For the Mainland students, the focal point is their adjustment to a similar yet different living culture, while for the Hong Kong students, an unexpected and divergent learning culture. With the particular context of the study, it is also hoped that attention can be drawn to the intercultural relationship and communication

between people of the same country with different cultures like Mainland and Hong Kong, and how members of both sides interpret it. Lastly, it has become clear that the trend of data collection methods adopted in empirical studies in recent years has pointed towards qualitative methods and as will be seen in the following chapters. This study carries on this trend with an endeavor to explore other issues in conducting qualitative research. The following section will turn our focus to a brief review of cultural adjustment and intercultural communication with which we can understand the theories concerning the ways in which people respond to a new environment.

2.3 Cultural Adjustment and Intercultural Communication

As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, this section aims to provide a basis for the later analysis and explanation of the ways in which the Mainland and Hong Kong students in this study responded to their new environment. It thus intends to address the following questions:

> ➢ What is the current trend of studies on 'cultural adjustment'?

> ➢ What are the basic theoretical frameworks of studies in intercultural communication?

> ➢ Which theories will be applied in later chapters to explain the present case and why?

2.3.1 Recent trend of studies on cultural adjustment

In light of the exploratory direction of the study proposed at the end of the Section 2.2, the present review will be undertaken in search of a more integrative approach in cross-cultural adjustment to embody both the sojourner's adjustment and the host's counter adjustment, and most important, the dynamics of the interaction and

communication between the two groups which largely guide the growth of the intellectual exchange and competition between them. To start the review, a basic apprehension of the concept of cultural adjustment is needed. As Church (1982:540) argues, the often-interchanged terms such as cross-cultural adjustment, cultural adaptation and ethnic assimilation "are ambiguous or suggest a permanent assimilation to the host culture." Sojourner adjustment, however, focuses more on the psychological change of "a relatively short-term visitors to new cultures to a new culture whose permanent settlement is not the purpose of the sojourn" (Brien and David (1971), cited in Ady, 1995:93). Having said that, the duration of 'short-term' was not made clear here. The Tsing Hua students in the present study were not here to reside, as expected at least initially before the amendment of the policy. Yet, their three years' stay could be considered short or long depending on each individual. They are not definitely the type of sojourners as 'a traveler' or 'a visitor' postulated by Gudykunst (1984). To stay in Hong Kong for three years and go through their study in the local classroom with their host counterparts, the change they have to make not only resides in a temporary and situational psychological aspect, but also some social participation in the university community which requires a certain degree of sociocultural adjustment. They may not have to give up their original identity and culture, but need to adjust to many of the values and behaviours of the mainstream culture in order to communicate and "fit in" the host community (Searle & Ward, 1990). This is broadly consistent with Kim's (1995) inclusive idea of cross-cultural adaptation, despite of its different degree of immersion as will be detailed in Section 2.3.3. Thus, cultural adjustment in the present context refers to sojourners' general change in both the psychological and sociocultural domains (Searle & Ward, 1990) to the new environment.

A review of the literature shows that the early and most frequently cited approach of studying sojourners was the concept of "culture shock" introduced by Oberg's (1960) which highlights the changing process of a sojourner's psychological 'shock' to a strange land at an early stage till the later recovery stage. Despite its prevalence, it has met with adverse criticisms for being vague, generalised, inadequate and narrow (Anderson, 1994; Searle & Ward, 1990; Kim, 1988). Though the later endeavour of probing cross-cultural adjustment from a stress-and-coping (Cole et al., 1980), social skills learning (Furnham & Bochner, 1986), social cognition (Searle & Ward, 1990), and journey (Anderson, 1994) perspective has contributed to the understanding of this field, they each seem to have magnified individual trees without seeing it in relation to the forest in which they are located. As Kim (1988) points out, being examined from multi-perspectives by investigators from various disciplines, the field has formed its abundance and multiplicity, but has simultaneously undergone the difficulties of comprehending and applying individual viewpoints across disciplines since they each claimed their studies based on a different ground. For example, Anderson (1994:298) finds that "different models lead to different definitions of adaptation, which lead to different findings, still giving rise to a broad noncomparibility in results." Along the same line, Church (1982) finds the conceptual framework vague and investigation methodology linear. For instance, "a serious conceptual and empirical error" that Furnham and Bochner (1986:11) found in most earlier studies is their failure to recognize the potential impact of the exchange students on the host society and its members. They therefore raised doubts about a one-way of two-way model of impact of the exchanges (ibid.). All these call for the need for integration, the need for illumination of key concepts involved, and the need for new ways of theoretical and methodological development. In this regard, Ward and Kennedy (1993:223) articulate three essential aspects to take into

account when theorizing cross-cultural adjustment: the differentiation of "core and peripheral" predictors of adjustment, the variation of adjustment "across sojourning groups" depending on the particular characteristics of "the group and the sojourn," and the modification of the extent of the relationship between psychological and sociocultural adjustment contingent upon sojourners' experience during transition. Others like Kim (1995:171) put forwards a more open "systems perspective" which is of particular relevance in analysing the context of the present study, and thus will be enumerated later in the present section.

2.3.2 Intercultural communication and intercultural communication competence

Similar to the above overview, we will first look into the diverse concepts of intercultural communication, followed by the major approaches of studying it and the intercultural communication competence involved in this process in this section.

2.3.2.1 Understanding intercultural communication

Intercultural communication, in Ting-Toomey's words is as simple as "the communication process between members of different cultural communities" (1999:16) in which process they each consciously and unconsciously carry their own culture inside the communication and form the puzzle of intercultural communication. Dodd (1998:4), therefore, refers to intercultural communication as "the influence of cultural variability and diversity on interpersonally oriented communication outcomes." This 'cultural variability and diversity' often prompts members of two different cultural groups to perceive the same thing differently. Rather than defining what intercultural communication is, we can better understand it by a closer look at the problems inherent in the production and interpretation of

messages between cultures with the following episode. One time after the Chinese New Year, a Chinese student came up to an Australian female teacher and praised her for gaining some weight after the break, while the Australian lady immediately denied that she has had a lot during the break and gained some weight. Since 'gaining weight' is viewed as a blessing for Chinese as the poor have to stay thin and skinny, the Chinese student in this case thought it would be a good idea to start the conversation with this topic. Obviously, it is totally a different story in western cultures. Such "semantic slippages" (Gass & Varonix, 1991; Ochs, 1991) account for only one of the many types of problematic communication caused by intercultural differences. Similar misinterpretation can occur between any social groups, but tends to be more obvious with individuals of different cultural group membership, and that of different socio-economic group membership. Individuals with distinctive group membership at these two levels, like those in the present study are very likely to face more intricate and difficult inter-group communication.

2.3.2.2 Approaches to studying intercultural communication

Based on the rich theoretical grounds derived from the studies of cross-culture and communication, many scholars of different disciplines have attempted to unravel the puzzle of intercultural communication with their respective models and approaches, again, emphasizing different facets of intercultural communication. Regarding the 'perceived cultural difference' as a stumbling block between groups of different cultures, Dodd (1998) presents an adaptive model that aims to urge the participants of two cultures to cast out their dissimilarity by withdrawing their judgment and predisposition, and develop a third culture in which both groups can build a trust, respect and loving relationship that leads to mutual adjustment. Ting-Toomey (1999:26), however, puts forwards her identity negotiation theory, recognizing

'identity insecurity' as the root of the 'vulnerability' that members of different cultural groups experience in communication. She examines, "how one's self-conception profoundly influences one's cognitions, emotions, and interactions" in his/her adjustment process and particularly articulates the critical role of self-image, the acquiring of one's identity through interaction with others (ibid.). By 'identity', Ting-Toomey means "the reflective self-conception or self-image that we each derive from our cultural, ethnic and gender socialization processes" (ibid.:28). By 'negotiation', she regards "a transactional interaction process whereby individuals in an intercultural situation attempt to assert, define, modify, challenge, and/or support their own and others' desired self-images" (ibid.:40).

2.3.2.3 Intercultural communication competence

Again, different researches have different views on the nature and components of intercultural communication competence. Kim (1991b: 263) considers intercultural communication competence as an internal "capacity or capability to facilitate the communication process between people from different cultural backgrounds ...," while Gudykunst (1991) highlights the communicators' awareness and mastery of the different perception of communication competence 'between' communicators of different cultural groups. In fact, both conceptualizations are essential to the constitution of effective intercultural communication competence.

With different perceptions of intercultural communication competence like the two mentioned above, many have offered the different parameters of intercultural communication competence mainly embracing the motivation, knowledge, and skills involved in the process of cross-cultural communication (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984; Gudykunst & Kim, 1992). Spitzberg (2000) takes a further step by mapping out a

system that integrates the various factors and to articulate the interrelationship between different factors. Others also articulate more clearly and specifically what lie behind each factor and what they really mean (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997). Among the motivational factors, the need for predictability, need to avoid diffuse anxiety, need to sustain our self-conceptions, and approach-avoidance are included; under the knowledge factors, the knowledge of how to gather information, of group differences, of personal similarities, and of alternative interpretations are listed; and lastly under the skill category, the ability to be mindful, to tolerate ambiguity, to empathize, to adapt our behavior, and to make accurate predictions and explanations are outlined (ibid.:257-275). However, some of these factors will weight more significantly than other according to the different situations of each specific context. The discussion of this section will thus focus on those significant factors in relation to the identification of group separation found in the findings.

2.3.3 Theoretical framework applied in the present study

As stated at the outset of Chapter 2.3.1, two key criteria, the emphasis on mutual adjustment and reciprocal communication, came into sight when considering the theoretical framework for the present study. This mutual yielding, understanding, and adjusting under the particular context were found especially decisive to the success of the scheme, which expects together the two groups to create academic exchange and build healthy competition. Taking the specific context of the present study, the gap of studies on Chinese students studying abroad as pinpointed at the end of Chapter 2.2, and the various approaches available in the field into account, Kim's (1988) integrative system theory on cultural adaptation was found most appropriate as her "systems" theory views cross-cultural adaptation as "a collaborative effort, in which a stranger and the receiving environment are engaged

in a joint venture" (1995:192). What is more, it puts communication "at the heart of cross-cultural adaptation – as it is in the enculturation process of native-born children" (Kim, 1988:59). As she (1997:407) further confirms, communication is "an essential mechanism that connects" strangers from another culture to their host society. Substantial evidence in the present study also suggests that the primary disturbance found between the mutual adjustments of the two groups lies in the perplexing communication between them. Therefore, through the examination of the interrelated process of the two groups' communication competence, their inter and intra-cultural communication, we will be in a better position to see what lies in between the communication of the two groups that may have hindered or facilitated their mutual support and academic exchange. Furthermore, to modify the theory based on the findings procured, part of Singer's (1987:10-11) conception of the formation of belief system, "the totality of all of the perceptions, attitudes, values, and identities that we hold – and the way we rank them at any moment in time ..." will be integrated. Other theories like Ting-Toomey's (1999) identity negotiation theory that highlights the significance of one's self-conception to his mental, feeling and behaviour in communication will also be applied when those particular aspects are touched. To begin with, a close examination of Kim's model will prepare us to delve into the issue with valid grounds.

2.3.3.1 Understanding Kim's integrative approach

To understand Kim's (1988) integrative approach for cross-cultural adjustment and communication, two concepts must be made clear before we proceed. The first one is the broad concept of 'cross-cultural adaptation' used by Kim (1988, 1995) as follows:

> assimilation (the acceptance of 'mainstream' cultural elements of the host society by the individual)," "acculturation (...the acquisition of some, but not

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all, aspects of the host society by the individual)," "coping and adjustment (...the psychological responses to cross-cultural challenges), and "integration (...[the] social participation in the host society). (1995:174)

The second concept is Kim's adaptation of 'stranger' as "individuals who are initially different and unknown to the new and unfamiliar cultural environment" (Kim 1988:39). By doing so, Kim (1988) uses this concept originated from Simmel (1950) to integrate other terms such as "immigrants, refugees, and sojourners who resettle for various lengths of time, as well as members of ethnic groups who cross subcultural boundaries within a society" (Kim 1995:174). This rather wide-ranging coverage of the dimensions urges the investigation to delve into process, structure, and factors involved from the internal and external, macro and micro aspects related to strangers' adjustment.

Following Ruben's (1975) theoretical framework of human communication, Kim's model carries two interwoven dimensions of communication, personal (intrapersonal) and social (Kim, 1988). Personal communication versus social communication refers to one's own internal interaction in terms of his feeling, understanding, reacting to the outside world based on each individual's family, educational, social and cultural background, while social communication opens him to others to have a two-ways exchange of ideas taking place in various public contexts. In Kim's construction, social communication consists of interpersonal communication and mass communication with the former focusing on the communication between people and people, while the latter between people and other social media. As the sojourners step into a new land, they automatically acquire the access to interact with the host people as well as their mass media. At the same time when the sojourners jump into the host circle, they, however, constantly

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jump out and join their own ethnic circle, keeping a certain level of their own interpersonal interaction and mass communication. It is this continuous living between the host circle and ethnic circle that forms an interactive social communication between the two groups in which our culture and communication create a parallel two-ways influence, as noted by Brislin (1993), and through this frequent and constant encounters and communication, one begins to adjust, acculturate, and socially function in the host communication patterns. Simultaneously, this social adaptive process will in return reinforce the sojourners' personal communication to further adapt to the host culture. What is also found indispensable in between the host communication and the ethnic communication is the host communication competence. The more capable the 'stranger' is to communicate with the host and his own group, the more likely he is going to change and function properly in both contexts. To secure an fruitful intercultural communication, Kim (1988) lastly outlined two crucial elements respectively from the sojourners' perspective, namely 'adaptive predisposition' comprised of the stranger's 'cultural/racial background,' 'open/resilient personality,' and 'preparedness for change'; and the 'the host environmental conditions,' namely 'receptivity' and 'conformity pressure'. Lastly the model closes with the 'adaptation outcome' encompassing 'functional fitness,' 'psychological health,' and 'intercultural identity' (See Fig.1 in Appendix 1).

With Kim's model as a basic theoretical framework, the study aims to search in and out between self, other, and the situation from both the strangers' and the hosts' perspectives to see what have facilitated and/or hindered their communication and thus adjustment to each other and the environment. The model will be reintroduced and revised in Chapter 8.1.3 when the data are analysed. In the next chapter we shall

first discuss the methods used for the collection of the data and related issues.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

With the theoretical support on the subject area of the study presented in Chapter 2, this chapter aims to outline the tools applied and other issues regarding the research methodology in the present study. In particular, the chapter embodies seven sections that respectively elucidate the origin and rationale of the study, introduce the case and key informants, probe into the questions of access, setting and informants, address the ethical issues concerned, map out the methods of data collection, investigate the problem of language, field relations and reflexivity, and finally, expound the process of data-recording, analysis and writing. Let's first start with the origin and rationale of the study.

3.1 Origin and Rationale

In this section, the following issues will be touched:

➢ How was the study started?

➢ When, why and to what extent were the original aims and focus of the study modified?

➢ Why was an ethnographic approach chosen to conduct the study?

3.1.1 Origin of the study

To begin with, the present study was originated partly on purpose and partly by chance. It was first started due to my family background and interest of study. Born in Beijing, China, raised in Hong Kong and furthering my education in the United States, I principally grew up in a circle with most family friends and relatives from Mainland, speaking Putonghua within our circle and maintaining pretty much our

own culture from Mainland. When I first made an attempt to start this study in 1998, I noted that an increasing number of Mainland researchers and scholars were introduced to the university campus in Hong Kong. For example, in the Hong Kong Baptist University where I was teaching, I found many Mainland postgraduate or doctorate students, researchers and teachers teaching and doing researches particularly in the Science faculties. They formed a particular group in the University. Because of my background, I related to them quite naturally and easily and managed to have quite a few close acquaintances in this circle. With my previous study area in teaching English as a second language, I automatically turned to the language issue in the University. To combine my interest in the life of this particular group of Mainlanders in the University and the language issue, I, therefore, intended to explore the difficulties they encountered when teaching in English in the University and the cultural gap between the Mainland teachers and the local Hong Kong students at the University. After a preliminary attempt by inviting some Mainland teachers teaching in the University to join the study, I realized that most of them were very hesitant to reveal the language difficulties or any other difficulties they faced at work mainly because it was very hard for them to get work in Hong Kong and obviously they could not afford to help with the study at the expense of losing their jobs.

3.1.2 Modification of the original aims and related reasons

The first idea just mentioned was thus dropped because of the lack of access to the specific field. Nevertheless, somehow I still had my passion and curiosity about the Mainlanders on campus, if not the teachers, the students, largely because I thought they were the minority in Hong Kong and I was interested in how they looked at Hong Kong as outsiders from an associated yet different perspective. What

happened coincidently was that a group of Mainland students were introduced to the undergraduate programmes in the universities in Hong Kong for the first time in early 1999, and eleven of them were brought to the University where I was located. They naturally became the desired target group of my study. Instead of focusing on the language issue only, they also brought a change to the focus of my study. Since the scheme was newly conducted, rather than studying the language barriers they may face or faced in the new learning and cultural environment, I broadened the sphere to be an overall evaluation of the scheme using the case at the Hong Kong Baptist University as an example. In other words, I planned to examine to what extent and in what ways the scheme has fulfilled its objectives as stated in the Policy Address 1998. Only a very small part of the entire investigation would be allied with the language and cultural concern. However, as the study went along, what was reflected from the data collected from different perspectives was a constant and consistent resonance to the language and cultural differences between the two groups. The echo was so strong that I decided to modify my original plan midway and include detailed discussion on the language and cultural adjustment, and the intercultural communication between the two groups with almost equal coverage as the discussion on the outcome of the scheme.

3.1.3 Rationale for adopting ethnographic approach

Having mapped out a general picture of what to find out, I then considered how to find out and what data to collect. In order to truly mirror the reality in regard to the research questions posted in Chapter 1.2 concerning the effects of the scheme, and its cultural significance for both the Mainland and the Hong Kong group, the first consideration became the depth of the data followed by the breadth. A close look at the issues discussed also suggested that they could be better disclosed by a study of

the classroom behaviour, interactive communication, and contextual influences involved when the two groups were placed together in their everyday classroom. That is why the ethnographic study approach came into place as it emphasizes the examination of "social and cultural patterns and meaning in communities, institutions, and other social settings" (Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte, 1999:1, also see Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Agar, 1980). It aims to understand parts of the world by looking at the way people experience and interpret life in their everyday lives (Cook & Crag, 1995). This prominence of comprehending the social, cultural, and meaning in life of a group of people was exactly what the study aims to bring out based on the investigation into the Mainland and the Hong Kong Chinese students in a university setting. Different from other qualitative research like semiotics, case studies, and analytic induction, it sheds special light on the holistic orientation and cultural essence when analyzing the data (Watson-Gegeo, 1988). This also shows why the ethnographic approach was chosen over other qualitative approaches.

Having placed the ethnographic study under the interpretive paradigm did not mean that quantitative methods would not be applied in the study. As the issue of whether to include quantitative research in ethnographic study has been constantly pondered by many ethnographers throughout the years (Bernard, 1995; Clifford, 1988; Pelto & Pelto, 1978), Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte (1999) argue that both qualitative and quantitative data are crucial to ethnographic research since the former elicit the textual phenomenon, while the latter present the numerical measurement to ensure validity. With an endeavour of encompassing both the intensive and extensive data, an initial attempt, thus, consisted of both the qualitative and quantitative search to discover data from various perspectives and to form triangulation. A combination of ethnographic interviews, questionnaires, class observation, participant observation,

journal writing and collection of their schoolwork were applied. However, not all these attempts were proved successful after their first trial. The ethnographic interviews, class observations, and participant observations proved to be feasible and suitable, but not the questionnaire and journal writing unfortunately. The informants seemed particularly hesitant whenever they were asked to put down their ideas in black and white. This could be respectively attributed to a general reason and a contextual one. Being bombarded by various surveys in their daily life in the institution and/or other settings, the local students seemed especially impatient when responding to questionnaires in general. For the Mainland students, being brand new to the Hong Kong society with a typical social Mainland background, they appeared very open to many new things, but remained skeptical and careful with things they had to jot down on paper.

This early tryout told me that practically, the use of qualitative methods was more possible and appropriate for two reasons. For one thing, the number of people involved in this study was limited to the eleven Mainland students originally admitted to the Tsing Hua University in Beijing, China, and their fifteen local counterparts studying at the Hong Kong Baptist University; for another which is more important, the Tsing Hua students were found a lot more willing to tell their stories verbally than in writing. Theoretically, the qualitative approach was needed since the study aims to delve into the complex interaction and communication between the two groups through which the academic exchange, healthy competition, and cultural exchange took place in this particular context. In order to unearth not only what happened, but also how, why, and what it means in reality, qualitative methods were found more apposite as Firestone (1987) wrote:

> Qualitative methods express the assumptions of a phenomenological paradigm
> that there are multiple realities that are socially defined. Rich description

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persuades by showing that the researcher was immersed in the setting and giving the reader enough detail to "make sense" of the situation. (p.16)

In Droysen's concept, instead of explaining, the present study aims to understand, to "understand the phenomena which fall within its domain" (Wright, 1971:11) with the researcher entering into the feelings of the informants in his study.

3.2 The Case and Key Informants

3.2.1 The case

As mentioned in Chapter 3.1.2, the case used in this study is the first batch of Mainland students studying in the undergraduate programmes at the Hong Kong Baptist University. These eleven students aged 18 to 20 first arrived in mid-January, 1999 after their one semester's study of English and computer studies in Beijing. Then, they received another semester's foundation courses, namely English, Hong Kong culture and society, Mathematics, Physics, and computer studies at the Hong Kong Baptist University. All together they had one year's preparatory courses before entering their major study, which takes another three years. Upon graduation, they are going to receive the bachelor degree granted by the Hong Kong Baptist University instead of the one from Tsing Hua University. They were first supposed to return to Mainland according to the agreement set at the beginning of the scheme, but later in March 2001 when they entered their second year of study, the policy was changed and they were granted the opportunity to work in Hong Kong after their graduation. In order to enhance the cultural exchange and mutual understanding, they were arranged to stay in the University Hostel with one local or foreign student as their roommate. Described as "the cream of the crop" among all university students in China, this group of students has sparked interest from various levels, including both the on-campus and outside media. One of the first questions the press

usually asked is 'what made these students give up the place at Tsing Hua University and choose to come study in Hong Kong?' It, however, may be more notable and relevant to ask 'what effects will they bring to the local students and how they perceive their communication and relationship among them? To see what may come along with these Mainland students, we shall first sketch the background they are from.

3.2.2 The key informants

The eleven Tsing Hua students were originally from various places of China, ranging from places as far as Sinjiang, a northwest city in China and as close as Guangzhou, a southern city right next to Hong Kong. Coming from a diverse geographical location, the informants, however, can be basically divided into two groups with pretty extreme contexts in terms of their socio-economic backgrounds, one group from the low-middle class families in the big city while another from poor village families. Out of the 11 students (nine males and two females), three came from big cities like Beijing, Gui Lin and Guangzhou, the remaining eight were respectively from small towns or villages as small as 200 residents in Guizhou, Guangxi, Shanxi, Shantoa, Singjiang, Hu Nan, and Jiangsu. As one of those from a small town, Liang Ming (ML), described a typical scenario of the childhood of the students from these villages:

> We did not have homework at all at primary school. If we did have, we could
> finish it in ten minutes in class after school. So, we would have fun right after
> school. Since many families in the villages raised ducks and others had cows,
> we drove the ducks out and had real fun.

Because of the practice of the One-child Policy, five of the informants were the only child in the family, while the others from villages had one to four brothers and sisters. In terms of language, except for the one from Guangzhou who spoke both

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Cantonese and Putonghua, they all spoke Putonghua and their hometown dialects with almost zero Cantonese, which is the dominant language used in Hong Kong.

3.3 Access, Settings, Informants

In this section, the following questions will be probed:

> What access to the study site was obtained and how?

> How was access to the participants obtained and to which ones?

> Where were the data collected and who provided the data?

3.3.1 Access

Through my post as a teaching staff at the Hong Kong Baptist University in which the study took place, I automatically gained the access to the study field, but not necessarily to the different domains that I planned to study. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:55) reminds us, "…one must remain sensitive to issues of access to different domains, it is unwise to allow one's plans to be guided entirely by one's own presuppositions concerning what is and is not accessible." This was exactly the initial problem when the study first started with an attempt to examine the difficulty and specific culture of teaching of the Mainland teachers at the University. Negotiating access is also an on-going process as the researcher continues his/her study and reaches out for individual participants in particular contexts in a specific location. It requires the researcher to talk to the right person at the right time with the right skills. Instead of approaching the informants individually, I first approached the "gatekeeper" in the present study (ibid.:63). Having discussed with the one in charge of these Mainland students about my intention and purpose of doing this study, I was kindly introduced to these Tsing Hua students to whom I explained about the present study and extended my invitation to get them involved in

the study. To my surprise, they were amazingly open and willing to participate in this study without any hesitation. In order to get to know them, I soon 'hung out' with them in some social gatherings organized by my American colleagues and the "gatekeeper".

This unexpectedly smooth access that began the present study was an initial and essential one. To carry it on, however, I had to continue the negotiation of access with people of other groups. While the casual approach of gaining access was applicable to those domains that could be approached personally, it was not the case with those beyond the researcher's control. The process of negotiating access to the different groups, namely the Mainland students, the local students, the teachers in the institution and those related to the Mainland students in institutions, therefore, varied to a large extent. With the very next and equally important group, the Hong Kong counterparts of the Mainland students, the negotiation process began with their teachers on whom I relied to randomly select the local informants. To gain the access to this group was much more complicated as I personally did not have access to the counterparts of the Tsing Hua students who respectively settled in six majors after their first semester's preparatory courses. The negotiation with the teachers did not meet much difficulty, as they were the English teachers of the same department I was teaching at. After I explained my intent and the study, they were all agreeable to help me to pass the invitation letters to their local students, indicating my intent with special emphasis on the pure research purpose of this study. To make it sound non-threatening and down to earth, I deliberately wrote the letter in Chinese and asked them to approach me directly on a volunteering basis without turning to their own teachers. Ideally, I was hoping that at least two, one with a higher academic performance and one with a lower academic performance, from each class would be

interested in joining the study so that I could see a more comprehensive picture of the Tsing Hua informants' impact on their counterparts of different academic levels. Nevertheless, since the invitation was on a volunteering basis, it was hard to guarantee the number of the informants I might obtain, not to say the distribution of their academic results. Finally, I was able to locate two to three local informants from five of the six classes. The one class in which opposition was met was due to the unfamiliarity between the informants and the researcher, as the teacher explained. To work it out, I used the friendly relationship of one of my students who happened to have close friends in the class where I failed to obtain any informants and these informants proved to be more opened and willing to talk than some others in the group. This relationship has not only made all the difference to the problem of access, but more important, to the quality of the data collected (Hoffman, 1980).

The last and the most difficult access to the individuals were the teachers who had the Tsing Hua students in their classes. Though I clarified that my intention was simply to observe the students of the two groups, especially how they interacted with each other, the access did not come easily. An immediate and absolute objection was encountered as soon as I mentioned it to some of the teachers. The negotiation with the teachers obviously required more time and effort than that with the students.

3.3.2 Settings

As stated earlier, the data in this study were collected in the Hong Kong Baptist University where the informants were located and where I was one of the teaching staff. Most of the data were, thus, collected physically inside the University settings including the classroom, the University library, student canteen, hostel, and even corridors. Data from the participant observations were, however, gathered outside

the University settings like social parties, social gatherings for festivals, the church right next to the University and the park near the church.

3.3.3 Informants

The major data providers consist of the eleven Tsing Hua informants, the fifteen Hong Kong Baptist University students working on their Year 1 undergraduate studies, and a few individuals related to the Tsing Hua group. Like many of their peers, the two groups of students were all strangers to the University where they started their brand new journey of university life. Yet, unlike others, these particular two groups not only embarked on their transition of university life, but also their transition to study in a multicultural and multi-level academically with their peers from Mainland for the Baptist students, while with peers from Hong Kong for the Tsing Hua students, for the very first time. As Spradley (1979:25) puts it, they were the 'ordinary people with ordinary knowledge', yet 'excellent informants' of their own culture and their own experience. Unlike 'subjects', they were not meant to be studied or tested, but to be learnt from; nor were they like 'respondents' who ended their task by responding to the survey or interview questions in which they were confined to act according to the pre-defined concepts, they finished their task by starting more questions and creating the concepts unknown to the researchers (ibid.). It was through the experience they had in a location unknown to outsiders that they were able to provide the quality information (Geiger, 1990). They offered the ethnographer a way of seeing their different culture and experience through their eyes.

3.4 Ethical Issues

Ethical issues arising from ethnographic study are particularly wide-ranging and

challenging due to its emphasis on the thick description of the "natural flow of human events over time" (Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte, 1999:273) and its strong dependence on field relations. They also differ from case to case for the context of each individual study is "highly situated" (Geertz 1988:5). In the present study, the three foremost ethical problems which were found particularly worth discussing encompass informed consent, confidentiality and privacy, and data dissemination.

3.4.1 Informed consent

A simple definition of 'ethic' given by the Collins Cobuild Dictionary goes like this, "ethics are moral beliefs and rules about right and wrong" (Sinclair, 1995:564). Obviously, the ethical dilemmas attached to ethnographic study are not as linear as what this suggests. Very often there are "grey areas" (Burgess, 1989:60), especially when talking about informed consent, the very first crucial step and core ethical issue in doing and discussing ethnographic research. Defined by Diener and Crandall (1978) as "the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions", informed consent looks simple but not actually so. A glance at the following two principles about obtaining consent tells us how difficult it is and at times impossible. Quoted in Burgess (1989:65), to secure the voluntary consent of the participants,

> the person involved should have legal capacity to give consent; should be so situated as to exercise free power of choice, without the intervention of any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, overreaching or any other ulterior form of constraint or coercion; and should have sufficient knowledge and comprehension of the elements of the subject matter involved as to enable him to make an understanding and enlightened decision.

The more recent one proposed by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) goes:

Participants should know that their involvement is voluntary at all times, and they should receive a thorough explanation beforehand of the benefits, rights, risks, and dangers involved as a consequence of their participation in the research project.

The difficulties observed by the above principles reside in the 'sufficient' and 'thorough' knowledge of the potential 'benefits, rights, risks, and dangers involved,' which could well govern the informants' decision in joining the study. What makes it more difficult is that they are supposed to comprehend all these 'beforehand' when the researcher may find it impossible for him or her to articulate what exactly could be obtained at the outset, and how it might be used at the end. Studies using tortuous field relations like those described by Burgess (1989) are even harder. In my case, I had direct contact with the gatekeeper and the Tsing Hua informants, but not with the local Baptist informants. I can recall myself saying and writing, 'the present study aims to find out the academic influence of the exchange scheme by looking at how you interact and communicate with each other in class and off class and the intercultural relationship among you.' With the teacher informants whose classes were observed, I deliberately stressed that in those circumstances the focus of the observation was upon the students, which would certainly not endanger the teacher in any ways. One time seeing me keeping notes constantly in one class observation, one Tsing Hua informant could not help asking me what I was jotting down, and I simply told him that I was writing down things happening in class between the teacher and students and among the students themselves. These explanations have given some ideas to the 'gatekeeper' and my informants about what was going on and what might happen, but it was definitely insufficient and incomplete. Thus, I could not say that the individuals were fully informed, but they were relatively well informed to the extent of what could be foreseen within that particular context at that particular time.

3.4.2 Confidentiality and privacy

Confidentiality and the respect of privacy are essentially important in all research study. It is more so in ethnographic study in which some detailed and sensitive information may be disclosed, and the researcher as the prime and direct instrument of data collection. Being immersed into another culture or circle, and seeing how people live or behave in the natural everyday settings, the ethnographic researcher may well have a chance to see what the outsiders cannot see. An effective and successful field relation can also open him/her to some information unobtainable to the outsiders. In the present case, some of the informants in the present study divulged to me things that they would not say to anyone in their circle. In return, this privilege and trust also gave me the burden of taking the full responsibility of maintaining confidentiality. In the later part of the present study, I realized that the more or deeper I know about them and what happened to them, the more responsibility I had to keep what I heard unknown to others, especially those who may affect the lives of the informants. The closer we became to each other and the more they "allowed [me] seeing something that would normally hidden", the more risky it was to sustain the confidentiality (Barnes, 1979:145). Being aware of it was useful, but keeping the vigilance at all times was difficult. In my case, I came across them quite often on campus and at times I myself was not conscious whether I was eliciting data from an informant or I was just talking to a friend. I remember one time when one of the informants asked me what another informant thought about the same issue, I almost slipped my tongue.

Confidentiality was easier to achieve during the data analysis and writing process. Several "confidentiality protection techniques" were recommended by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992), but the more relevant ones in the present study

include the use of pseudonyms and anonymity. The informants' real names were replaced by fictitious names with an additional indication of the place they are from by using 'HK' for students from the Hong Kong Baptist University, and 'ML' for students from the Tsing Hua University, Mainland China to avoid confusion. The excerpts of narrative scripts taken from the interview data will therefore be signified by the interview number followed by the script line(s) used at the end of each quote. For those excerpts from informants of the Hong Kong group, an 'H' will be placed right before the interview number, while an 'M' for excerpts from informants of the Mainland group. An example of each will be like 'H3/124' and 'M8/151'. Extracts of scripts from follow-up conversations will be differentiated by the use of 'a' and 'b' after the first interview number like 'H3a/35' and 'M8a/56'. The class observation data were divided into two sets with the first round of observation numbered from 'Observation A' to 'Observation E', and the second round of observation 'Observation 1' to 'Observation 6' according to the sequential order each observation was made. However, I have to confess that the informants' names were not made false or anonymous till the middle of analysis writing process. Despite my awareness of the importance of not revealing the identity of the informants, I worried about the effects of the "confidentiality protection techniques" on the analysis process. I was afraid that using those techniques at an early stage might reduce the precision or detail of the analysis, which consisted of complicated comparison and contrast of the data. Though the change of names helped to prevent identity from being exposed, one may still have to recognize that "there is no absolute guarantee of total anonymity as far as life studies are concerned" (Cohen & Manion, 1994). Above all, what fascinated the researcher was not the behaviour or thought of either individual, but that of a group of human (ibid.) and ultimately through which they illustrate their particular value and culture.

3.4.3 Data dissemination

As the present study approached to an end, the potential ethical problem caused by data dissemination began to come into sight. Having a comprehensive and thorough informed consent at the early stage of the investigation, and a careful strategy for handling confidentiality throughout the investigating process may have helped the researcher to achieve an ethical position, but it definitely is not the end of the story. The researcher may still fall into the trap of being unethical easily if the handling of data dissemination is not considered vigilantly. As Finch (1989:116-117) reminds us, "there can be acute ethical and political dilemmas about how the material produced is *used*, both by the researcher her/himself, and by other people." In connection with ethnographic study or interviewing, he further points out:

> the researcher is very much in a position of trust in being accorded privileged
> access to information which is usually private or invisible. Working out how
> to ensure that such trust is not betrayed is no simple matter ... (ibid.:117).

A more specific examination of what to consider in this regard outlined in Burgess (1989) encompasses the extent to which data can be reported back, and the extent to which research reports can be used by policy makers and in educational practice. The dilemmas lying underneath bring us back to the question about how people at a different position may look at the right and wrong from a different angle. What the researcher perceives to be a virtue may well be regarded problematic by others or the researched. Burgess (1989) has experienced exactly this difficulty in his study in Bishop McGregor School. The present study is not as complicated and sensitive for almost all the informants were students in a position of low stake. By all means, however, I would not want to see anything jeopardize the friendship we have established for everything they did for the study, they did it through their faith to a friend.

What is absolutely clear to me is that special care should be given when considering who to give the data, what to give and when to give. I think the first group to be informed about the findings is the informants involved in the present study as they have been faithfully open themselves to inquiries throughout the investigating process even at the early stage when they did not know me well and later regardless of little information about how the data will be used. All data revealing the communication and interaction that has a greater impact on their academic exchange and competition will be released to them. The in-depth private experience of the Tsing Hua informants' lives and schooling in the past, conversely, will be reserved for research only under their permission and approval. At this stage, consultation will also be made to seek their approval of releasing the data associated with the effectiveness of the scheme studied to the related department at the University and that in the Education Department. Again, the data and suggestions included will be governed by the extent to which information is important to reflect the effectiveness and improvement of the scheme.

Finally, we can see the role of ethics in the search for truth in Cavan's remarks (1977:810) as follows:

> ... Being ethical limits the choices we can make in the pursuit of truth. Ethics say that while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better, even if, in the extreme case, the respect of human nature leaves one ignorant of human nature.
>
> (Cited in Cohen & Manion 1994:359)

3.5 Methods of Data Collection

In this section, the following questions will be addressed:

➤ What methods of data collection were applied in this study?

➤ Why and how they were applied?

3.5.1 Methods, rationales, and means of data collection

As pointed out earlier in Section 3.1.3 of the present chapter, a variety of qualitative and quantitative research methods with the ethnographic approach were first tried out, but only the ethnographic interview, classroom observation and participant observation proved to be successful, and thus became the three major data collection methods in this study. They respectively played a primary and a supplementary role in the study. While the ethnographic interview was applied in an attempt to reveal how informants felt about, speculated and interpreted how students of the two groups interact with each other under different circumstances and how they adjust themselves to this new and different learning and cultural environment, the participant observation was used to delve into the range and depth of the complexity and subtleness of the intercultural relationship between the two groups and the impact of being together on both sides, with the class observation as a support and cross-reference of the data obtained in both the formal and informal ethnographic interview.

3.5.1.1 The arranged ethnographic interviews

As one of the frequently quoted definitions of ethnographic interview goes, "an ethnographic interview is a particular kind of speech event" (Spradley, 1979:55). It differs from the ordinary interviews both in terms of its structure and its rationale. Unlike the structured (or formal), semi-structured, or unstructured (or informal) interview, the ethnographic interview acts just like a series of 'friendly conversations' in which informants disclose information naturally, spontaneously and almost unconsciously without noticing that they are being interviewed (ibid.). It can take place any time and anywhere when the researcher comes across his/her informants. Certainly, what alters is that the researcher plays more an inquisitive

role in the conversation than the informants, always asking, repeating, and expanding questions, while the informants tend to be surprised about the curiosity that the researcher casts on them. In addition to the structural difference, the ethnographic interview also differs from the regular interview in terms of its primary goal and rationale. When conducting ethnographic interviews, rather than drawing the informants to find out what are set on the interview question list, the researcher aims to be led by the informants to seek much more than what is set in his/her agenda in order to reveal the real picture of the ways the informants interpret and understand the world. "Instead of collecting 'data' about people, the ethnographer seeks to learn from people..." (ibid.: 4). With this distinct underlying principle in mind, the researcher adopts a very different approach to setting, asking, responding to and following up his/her questions derived from the response of the informants.

A preliminary formal ethnographic interview was arranged between mid-March, 1999 to mid-April, 1999, three months after the Tsing Hua informants arrived to find out the social, cultural, and academic background that the Tsing Hua informants brought with them before they joined the scheme and their initial adjustment as Cook and Crang (1995:7) argue that simply knowing "where people are (socially and spatially)" is not adequate, what is also important is to find out "where they/we are coming from, going to, and where on this path the research encounter has occurred". This is because people's identities and memories are shaped by their everyday experience and actions that respond to the world at manifold points, times and places and tangled together throughout their course of life. To understand the background of the Tsing Hua informants could help to trace back why they felt how they felt. The interview with the Tsing Hua informants was conducted individually since it involved a large amount of private narration. During the interview, for the most part

the informants were encouraged to tell their life stories at different stages in chronological order freely because what they spontaneously brought up on their own seem likely to be most important to them. However, in order to cover several variables that could may have influenced the way they were and the way they would be, the informants were asked about such things as parents' expectations, teachers' influence, learning strategies, learning motivation, personal goals, and reasons to come to Hong Kong, if these had not come up casually. All interviews were tape recorded except for one informant who did not like to have a record of any kind throughout the research period. With that informant, the interviewer jotted notes and key phrases mentioned.

Between early-February, 2000 to early-April, 2000, the second round of ethnographic interviews was respectively conducted among the Tsing Hua informants and their local counterparts. Some were done individually, while some in pairs since they tended to respond more actively and naturally when triggered by their peers who shared the same experience. During the interview, attention was turned to the Tsing Hua informants' life after they arrived at Hong Kong and, in particular, their life with the local students and some international students at the University. With the local counterparts, focus was given to the way they felt about their Tsing Hua counterparts, their reaction to their presence, the occurrence of their communication and interaction, and the impact that the Tsing Hua students made on them. 'Grand-tour' questions (Spradley 1979) were used to start the informants looking back, reckoning and describing their being together. Information on two areas was especially gathered in depth. They are respectively the Tsing Hua informants' cultural and academic interaction with the local students and their cultural and learning adjustment at the University. To fully understand the meaning

of what they say, the informants were often encouraged giving concrete examples, in which they sometimes disclosed more extensive and decisive information.

3.5.1.2 Other 'friendly conversations' – informal ethnographic interviews

Since research interviews are considered unnatural no matter how the researcher tries to make them casual, other 'friendly conversations' with the informants of both groups were adopted to seek their spontaneous and unconscious utterances, which have proved to be incredibly useful and important to disclose what they really meant by what they said. These 'friendly conversations' took place almost anywhere on or off campus whenever the researcher had a chance to meet the informants. They lasted as short as five minutes to as long as 45 minutes depending on each particular situation. The researcher often started with the general questions about their study and life in Hong Kong and tried to get into the areas that were worth prompting based on what the informants had mentioned in the arranged ethnographic interviews. In a way these 'friendly conversations' acted like a series of follow-up interviews. Based on an increasing mutual trust, respect and the relationship built, these 'friendly conversations' were often found surprisingly fruitful and truthful, providing information to answer the questions, which arose from the previous formal interviews. At times they became the best tool to reveal the informants' "undecided, ambiguous, and contradictory feelings" about what they have said before and what they have not mentioned previously (Cook & Crang, 1995:46).

3.5.1.3 Participant observation

Participant observation, one of the key characteristics of an ethnographic study (Stewart, 1998), was also employed in the present study, but to a limited extent, unfortunately. Since the researcher needed to fulfill her duties during her regular

working hours, most of the participant observations made took place off campus when opportunities were generated for the informants to expose their interactions and performances. These were some social gatherings during various festivals or occasions in which, together with the informants, the researcher participated actively as a Complete Member Researcher (CMR) (Adler & Adler, 1987). Unlike the classroom observation, the researcher was an entire insider in the cases just mentioned, trying to watch the informants in natural settings from an outsider's perspective. From the very beginning when the Tsing Hua students were first introduced to the researcher till the end of the present study, a total of about 18 hours' participant observations that respectively occurred in some social parties arranged by other colleagues and the 'gatekeeper', some social gatherings for festivals organized by the researcher, the English lunch gathering at the student canteen, and some lunch gatherings at the Baptist hospital canteen after church on Sundays.

3.5.1.4 Non-participant class observation

Two rounds of class observations were conducted respectively during the first semester when the Tsing Hua students had classes by themselves, and during the second semester when they joined the classes with the local students. In both rounds of observation, the researcher acted as Peripheral Member Researcher (PMR) (ibid.), observing what took place on the side. The first round of class observation aimed at observing the more original "self" of the Tsing Hua informants, finding out how they behaved and interacted in class when they were with their own group. A total of eight hours' class observation in which the researcher was completely an outsider was made between late April 1999 and early May 1999. Since the whole class had only eleven students, the classes were all conducted in tutorial mode mixed with

some teacher's lectures. The classes lasted 50 minutes to 100 minutes with English as the main medium of instruction. The teachers were respectively from Australia, Mainland and Hong Kong.

The second round of class observation took place during early November 1999 to early December 1999, before the second round of interviews were conducted with both groups. In an attempt to find out more about the interaction between teachers and students, and in particular, the Tsing Hua students and their Baptist counterparts, classes selected to observe in this study were mostly tutorials which lasted 50 minutes per session with 15 to 20 students in each class. Furthermore, a total of seven hours' class observation were made in this round as the Tsing Hua students were respectively situated in six classes according to their different majors. Since tutorials are not provided in every course due to the nature of each subject, except for the English courses for Year 1 students, most of the classes observed were the English classes in which English was the medium of instruction, while students may utter some Cantonese if they could not express themselves. These EAP (English for Academic Purpose) courses, which last from one to two semesters according to different majors, are compulsory for all Year 1 full-time non-English speaking students. They aim to prepare the students with the necessary English writing skills to cope with the English academic writing tasks in their major studies. Unlike the lectures, the teaching and learning in the tutorials were usually carried out through group discussions and other task-oriented activities to provide students with more opportunities to practice what they were instructed in their lectures in small groups and these were found especially helpful to discover how the local students' reacted to their Tsing Hua counterparts' presence and, in particular, how they interacted and communicated with each other that reflected the academic exchange and competition

among them.

3.6 Language, Field relations and Reflexivity

In this section, the following aspects will be reflected:

➤ In what ways my language skills have assisted me in the study?

➤ What kind of relations existed and how were they built?

➤ What was the significance of reflexivity?

3.6.1 Language

Acquiring the local language, the most obvious skill needed for participating in another social and cultural circle (Whyte & Whyte, 1984) was not problematic to me during the process of discovery. Unlike most ethnography researchers, I was not totally new and unfamiliar to either the Hong Kong or the Mainland context in which the informants of the present study were situated. Born in Beijing and raised in Hong Kong, I was able to maintain, to a large extent, my first language, Putonghua, handle Cantonese, and to a certain extent, managed to understand cultures of both places simultaneously due to my childhood experience in Beijing and social circle in Hong Kong. The use of Cantonese and Putonghua came naturally during most of the time of the study. Besides, since the study field was an education setting where the researcher was one of the members, the genre applied in it was familiar to the researcher. Having said that, it was not as easy when it came to the time for translating and interpreting what was discovered.

As Putonghua was used in most of the interviews conducted with the Tsing Hua informants, while Cantonese with the local Baptist informants, all the data needed to be translated into English when analyzing and writing the results. Most of the

informants of both groups, the Mainland students and the local students, were the natives of their culture, and apparently fully reflected their culture in their language whose equivalent terms were found not available in English. Besides, just because I can manage the two languages used in the present study does not guarantee a perfect understanding of what the informants meant since I may take it for granted of what they said based on my own experience. The problem with this over-familiarity with the research site has gradually come into view as I worked along, and this will be further examined in the next section, Chapter 3.7.2 when the issue of validity and reliability of the study was raised. Instead of relying on one or two terms, follow-up conversations were made to seek clear explanation of what they meant in order not to cause confusion or distortion. The quality of translation could thus be ensured. With the field notes of class observation and participant observation, the translation was as not a problem since they were done in English in the first place.

3.6.2 Field relations

My field relations with the Tsing Hua informants, the local Baptist informants and the local teachers whose classes were observed were quite different. To the local Baptist students and teachers, I was viewed as simple as a teacher/colleague and a researcher like many others in the institution, introduced as one of the teachers in the University, and a researcher in this particular context. This, however, was not the case with the Tsing Hua informants because of my initial approach to them and my particular background mentioned. Unlike the relationship with the local Baptist informants whom I only got to know through their teachers, I first started the relationship as a teacher and researcher, but soon became friends with the Tsing Hua informants as mentioned in Chapter 3.3.1. With the field relation as friends gradually built after they accepted my invitation, they felt like they were simply

helping a friend out, according to some of them. Surprisingly, none of them felt that they were formally asked for information. "I felt that we were simply helping a friend by telling her something about our life," Tang Ziyong (ML) described. This 'friendship' as field relation has helped to extend and expand the depth and range of data collected tremendously. Another overlooked factor that gained me the friendly relationship was my smile, as the other Tsing Hua informants cited. Unexpectedly, this little tiny gesture has facilitated me to build a natural field relation in the study.

The second noteworthy field relation with the Tsing Hua informants was the relationship of friend as well as advisor. As we got to know each other better along with the progress of the study, I was considered as a friend through whom they could seek advice in the University. I was being important to them to turn to when they had questions related to the University or their living in Hong Kong, and when they had personal problems that they could not turn to anyone too close to them in the University. Two of the Tsing Hua informants, in particular, have come to me in person and shared about their personal problems. They needed someone whom they could trust and ask for help yet distant from their circle. Another two went to church with me regularly. As a local Hongkonger with the Mainland background who maintains her Putonghua, sometimes they pictured me as their 'big sister' they could turn to. This role relationship was both good and bad for the present study. It gained me lots of convenience and chances to elicit information from them, yet put me in the danger of being so close to them that I might lose sight of what they did and said objectively. This appeared especially true when analyzing the data. I had to keep reminding myself of maintaining more distance from them and the phenomena under study, looking at the whole thing from a 'third eye'. On the one hand, I knew it was essential to have good rapport with the informants as they would feel less threatened

and thus more open to share if they saw the researcher as one of their members; on the other hand, I understand it was equally important to keep a good balance of the roles we play as "all ethnographic learning is a joint production of perspective of outsiders... , the perspective of insiders... , and the interaction between these perspectives" (Stewart, 1998:22). I have to confess that I did not make an effort to manage the division of labors between the outsiders and insiders within the research process. It was more the environment in which we were situated that decided the distant; yet close relationship between the informants and I. Together, nonetheless, we told stories (Van Maanen, 1988).

3.6.3 Reflexivity

Having said that "together we told stories" (ibid.), the researcher often plays the key role in selecting what to see, what to hear and what to report ultimately in most cases. That is why the reflexive account of one's fieldwork comes into an important place. These field notes reflecting the researcher's subjective sentiment work like a second voice or a mirror, telling and showing the researcher how he/she reacts to the researched and how he/she affects the analysis and investigation in general. What is often emphasized is how this reflexivity raises the researcher's awareness of the potential effects of his/her feeling on what actually happened so that a better objectivity can be achieved (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). Besides, the reflexive data also receives special attention when the analysis is written up. As Clifford (1986:14) states,

> A subgenre of ethnographic writing emerged, the self-reflexive "fieldwork account." Variously sophisticated and naïve, confessional and analytic, these accounts provide an important forum for the discussion of a wide range of issues, epistemological, existential, and political.

From my experience, the practice of keeping reflexive field journals did give me a

chance to voice how I felt about what happened. In a way, it has helped to map out an interwoven, particularized, narrative and generalized description governed by the voice appearing on the paper. Yet, what cannot be denied is that the magnification of this alertness alone has not brought me to a neutral stand. With my background from Mainland, family influence and local teaching experience, I could still find my subjective feeling here and there to a certain extent. Reflexivity, therefore to me, worked more like an intriguing element throughout the investigating process than a validating mechanism at the later stage. As I jotted down how I felt about what I saw and heard, intuitively I in return poured out my curiosity, doubt, confusion, query, and imagination that triggered my next step of exploration and formation of relation of the data, and at times stirred my next focus of study. Another equally noteworthy part that reflexivity has served was an on-going self-examination of my research skills and sense. As a green ethnographer, this reflexive practice has revealed to me what I have done wrong or not appropriate, what and how things can be done better in similar cases, which is certainly significant for my future study.

3.7 Data-recording, Analysis and Writing

In this section, the following issues will be covered:

➢ What data were recorded and in what forms?

➢ How and when were data analysed?

➢ What difficulties have been encountered when analyzing and writing the data?

3.7.1 Data recording

All the data encountered during the process of study were recorded in one form or another. The data of the two arranged ethnographic interviews respectively done with the Tsing Hua informants and their Baptist counterparts were all taped recorded

except for the interview with one of the Tsing Hua informants who found it uncomfortable with tape recording. The data with that particular informant were therefore jotted down. With the rest tape recordings, transcription was carefully made verbatim for each of them. As Spradley (1979:73) warns, "failure to take these steps along the path to discovering the inner meaning of another culture will lead to a false confidence that we have found out what the natives know." To ensure what the informants said was not distorted or skipped in any ways, they were invited to read the tape scripts of the interviews and make corrections if needed based on which amendments were made. Fieldnotes were also made during all classroom observation. This instant data recording, however, was hardly possible with the 'friendly conversation' and most participant observation since the researcher functioned as both the participant and the observer simultaneously. Notes had to be made at the earliest convenience after the observation. This recalling of what has been seen and mentioned was found challenging as the researcher might have got so involved that he/she forgot that he/she had to observe at the same time during the participation.

3.7.2 Data analysis

When talking about social science that touches the complexity of culture reflected by language, thought, behaviour and an amalgamation of all these, Hedges (1985:85) has the following insight:

> There are very few golden rules and certainly no magic formulae for cutting through to Truth – if indeed there is any single monolithic truth, which is not typically the case. Human beings are complex, ambivalent, inconsistent creatures; ...Underneath the mess of language lies a mess of thought and a tangle of behaviour. If our research tools cannot recognize ambivalence and inconsistency as real and important, they will not help us to a very profound understanding of human thoughts and behaviour.

Having said that, it does not mean that the ethnographic data can be casually handled as many expect that "...true ethnographic work is systematic, detailed, and rigorous, rather than anecdotal or impressionistic" (Watson-Gegeo, 1988:588). It is this systematic arrangement of data analysis that makes ethnographic study a science approach. How all the notes and recording data can be transferred and transformed systematically, thoroughly and accurately becomes a great challenge to many ethnographers. It includes a range of processes of handling data, including the script typing, translating, code developing, data sorting, and most of all, making sense of all of them. As Lincoln and Guba (1985:224) put it:

> What is at issue is the best means to 'make sense' of the data in ways that will facilitate the continuing unfolding of the inquiry, and, second, lead to a maximal understanding (in the sense of *Verstehen*) of the phenomena being studied.

With the above process, the ethnographer attempts to make sense of the data by discovering the 'patterns, themes, consistencies and exceptions' which emerge from the data (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995:296). What can be noted here is the emphasis on the 'variation' and 'entire distribution' of data selection rather than 'central tendency' (Johnson, 1990; Schwartzman, 1993; Watson-Gegeo, 1988:585). Mehan (1979) finds this 'comprehensive data treatment' (quoted in Watson-Gegeo, 1988:585) especially important as each individual idea will help to contribute to a valid conclusion, which complements the existing theory or generates a new one ultimately. Another feature that is also essential and special about the data analysis of ethnographic study is the on-going reflection and analysis of what has been collected which keep the researcher exploring what can be related. This constant informal analysis in return enhances the richness, reliability and internal validity of the data. Like Glaser and Strauss (1967:6) pinpoint:

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Generating a theory from data means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research.

Of the many tactics of generating meaning provided by Miles and Huberman (1994:245), noting patterns, themes, seeing plausibility and clustering, counting, making contrasts/comparisons, partitioning variables, subsuming particulars into the general, factoring, noting relations between variables, finding intervening variables, building a logical chain of evidence and finally making conceptual/theoretical coherence were used. It is through this continuous systematic process of induction that a grounded theory (ibid.) can be fully derived from the data.

Based on the series of processes outlined above and the features of data analysis of qualitative research, the data in the present study went through a constant informal analysis as well as a formal analysis after all data were gathered. The formal analysis started with an initial review of all the raw data including the tapes and fieldnotes. The tape recording was then transcribed verbatim and coded to identify key words and phrases which may form relevant topics or themes concerning not only the broad research questions posted in Chapter 1.2, but also other topics emerged from each individual voice. The themes and patterns were than categorized to form groups of concepts. By comparing and contrasting the relationship of different groups of concepts, tentative theories emerged, yet to be tested and confirmed. Because of the complicated underpinning nature of human thoughts and behaviour, these hypotheses often stimulate new hypotheses after they were tested case by case, which drove the researcher back to more field work. It was this repetitive process that brought the raw data to a certain meaning and was built on the existing theory.

Validity and reliability – problems and solutions

Validity and reliability are often the vital yet controversial issues in all kinds of research. The present study is no exception. Simply by following the guiding principles of data analysis did not necessarily guarantee easy validity and consistency in the present study for the following two focal reasons.

First of all, unlike other approaches to research, the researcher was the primary instrument for collecting primary data. As a participant, he/she has to immerse himself/herself into the field on the one hand, as an observer, he/she has to detach and sit back on the other hand. Ideally, the researcher should be an "intelligent, sympathetic, and non-judgmental listener" to other members involved (Cassell 1988:95). Others like Cook and Crang (1995) and Tedlock (1991) argue that it is not as clearly cut as 'subjectivity' and 'objectivity' as participant observation is a way of developing intersubjective understanding between the researcher and the researched (quoted in Cook & Crang 1995). This is obviously easier to say than done, especially in the case of analyzing the data. What to analyze, how and in what order to analyze the data were all determined by the researcher. His/her objectivity, therefore, becomes extremely crucial.

In my case, the difficulty of keeping an objective stand lies in my particular background and my experience with the local Hong Kong students. Being a Mainlander as well as a Hongkonger, and a local teacher for five years, I had the advantage of gaining an easy access and field relation with informants of both groups. The disadvantage, however, was the intricacy when selecting and analyzing the data. I was sensitive in capturing the message that the informants attempted to deliver; yet at times too quick to react or over react to what the message really was.

As my diary reads,

> I feel like I am trying to impose what I assume I will see based on my
> impression on the Mainland students and my experience with the local students
> rather than what I should see solely from the data. I know them too well. How
> can I stop being driven by my feeling?

This self-conscious reflection was patently telling me that the study was affected by my personal characteristics and orientations. Another subtle factor that affected the study was the interpersonal dynamics and interactions between the researcher and the researched (Gartrell, 1979). Knowing the Tsing Hua informants personally, but the local Baptist informants indirectly, I tended to be more active and easy-going with the Tsing Hua informants. Under this circumstance, I had to be sure that the analysis I made was not the imaginary, but the imagined, not the false, but the fictional, as Stewart (1998) states, citing Geertz (1988).

The second struggle lies in the fact that ethnographic studies are so open that the researcher has no control over the variables that can be testified more definitely since "their focus is the natural flow of human events over time" (Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte, 1999:273). At the same time, they are "highly situated" (Geertz, 1988:5) with data collected in a particular place, at a particular context, over a particular period of time, from a particular group of informants with their particular experience. This particular nature of ethnographic study drove some to give up the search for validity, while others to interpret validity in other ways like "goodness," "believability," and "catalytic validity" (Elisenhart & Howe, 1992; Lather, 1986; Lincoln, 1990; Smith, 1990). A more current one is Stewart's five tactics in enhancing validity and reliability, including a trail of the ethnographer's path, respondent validation, feedback from outsiders, interrater checks on indexing and coding and comprehensive data archive (1998:33-46). Above all, as Schensul,

Schensul and LeCompte (1999:272-273) argue "the *quality* of investigation must be of paramount concern in any scientific endeavor – including ethnographic research."

The present study has, therefore, adopted triangulation and respondent validation to minimize the problem of validity. The use of triangulation, an imperative strategy for obtaining valid findings in ethnographic work (Diesing, 1971), enables the researcher to look at the issues arisen from the study from different angles. This combining the data of different sources and/or through different methods, unlike the name 'triangulation' suggests, actually involves more than three sources or using more than three research methods in most ethnographic studies. Elliott (2000) thus feels that the triangulation to him no longer means a check with three aspects only, but a multi-dimensional aspect. In the present study, the triangulation of methods was reflected by its use of ethnographic interviews, class observation, and participant observations, while the triangulation of sources included the Mainland students, their Hong Kong local counterparts, and the University administrative staff. With the data on the Tsing Hua informants' adjustment and interaction with their local counterparts, the triangulation also extended to different times. They were respectively interviewed at the beginning of their arrival, a year after their stay with many follow-up 'friendly conversations' closer to the middle of their second year's stay. What adds to the validity of this strategy was the assurance of sufficient specification from each perspective. This opens up the investigation to the readers to 'make their own informed judgments about the interpretation and findings' presented (Stewart, 1998:30).

Secondly, the maximizing of validity of the data analysis was achieved through

respondent validation. Speaking the same language as the informants did grant me the comprehension of what the informants meant at the surface level. Growing up in different generations, however, could move me to interpret the same concept in very different ways. In an attempt to solve the underlying problem of validity, respondent validation was used. As mentioned earlier in data handling, the informants were asked to verify what they said by checking the accuracy of the tape scripts based on the recording. Each script was then revised according to the informants' correction and confirmation. The data, especially those derived from the class observation and participant observation were substantiated by some follow-up "friendly conversations" made throughout the next half a year respectively with the Tsing Hua informants and their local counterparts to clarify any uncertainties or cross check the consistency of their responses.

To tackle the issues of reliability, the stability of data over time and across researchers and methods, arisen from the present study, I tried to respond to the ten common queries set by Miles and Huberman (1994). I have to admit that I worked alone throughout the whole investigation and this became more difficult when dealing with the question of coding and having others check my coding or interpretation. This inter-rater reliability was not available. However, much endeavour has been made to make my role and status clear in the field, to check whether data across sources are coherent, and to check the quality of data by using self-corrective techniques. Data across sources were checked for consistency and accuracy. Follow-up 'friendly conversations' were also made to clarify any doubt after the transcripts and the fieldnotes were crosschecked for coherence and to confirm some decisive ideas that the informants previously made.

3.7.3 Writing up the analysis

Spradley (1979:94) describes the writing of ethnographic research as "a refined process of analysis", which is very true in the present study. It was not until the point of writing up the analysis that I found out there is so much more waiting to be discovered. The new hypotheses and discrepancies between data of different sources did drive me back to the field to have further investigation. For example, a "friendly conversation" was carried out to seek the reasons for the Tsing Hua informants to gradually stop asking questions in the class when they were with their local counterparts (according to the findings given by their local counterparts), which was very inconsistent with their behaviour when having classes with their own group. It was then found out that they (the Tsing Hua informants) held a very distinct learning strategy to that of their local counterparts, which could be seen by the kind of questions they asked in class. As one of the Tsing Hua informants said, "the local counterparts tend to ask questions simply up to what they were taught, whereas we aim to outperform our teachers by challenging them with questions beyond what we are taught." (M5a/6) Gradually, the Tsing Hua informants began to ask fewer and fewer questions, as they were the only one or two who shared the message, while the majority had to merely wait and see. Instead they would ask their teachers privately after class. Without continuing the investigation, I may well assume that the Tsing Hua informants have become less active asking their teachers questions after being in the local classroom for a period of time.

Writing is not only a fascinating process of conducting ethnographic study, but also a challenging one, a challenge particularly to the researcher's inner self. This challenge can be stemmed back to the researcher's delicate role in the study from the very beginning. He/she has to get attached to the people who experience life in their

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own way in a particular field, but detached when analyzing and writing about the findings. And, this is exactly where the challenge lies. By the time the researcher writes up the analysis, he/she most likely has been in the field for quite a period of time and he/she might have been, more or less, affected by the research itself and this can be apparently seen by the way the researcher writes. As the comments Tedlock gave on Evans-Pritchard's classic ethnography of The Nuer (1940) goes:

> [He]…included a seven-page first-person confessional account of the terrible living conditions and informant difficulties he experienced during fieldwork in the Sudan. In sharp contrast, the remainder of the book, written in an omniscient third-person authoritative voice, describes highly abstract, nonempirical entities, such as lineage and age-set system, and the idealized actions of common denominator people: the Nuer do this, the Nuer do that. (1991:74)

In my case, it was not a matter of using the first or the third person when writing, but a tendency of using additional emotional description that took the meaning away from its original place. Having gone through hours of talking with the informants, I was inevitably affected by the insiders and this influence was ultimately reflected when writing up the analysis with their faces in my minds. I have to acknowledge that, especially at the outset of writing the findings, I was much more affected by how the informants felt and this influence was totally underestimated. Instead of letting them to speak for themselves, I was tempted to speak for them, which was obviously a mistake. That is why Stewart (1995) shared the same thought as Agar (1986b) who argues that it is easy for people to overestimate the influence of the researcher on the researched, while the reverse way may not be well noted.

Another key challenge was the proper use of language to deliver the exact messages emerged from the findings, and one of the major ones was the generalization about the sub-groups within each of the two informant groups. Since the study involved

only the 11 Tsing Hua students and their 15 local counterparts, the notion of percentage or proportion was problematic. While the use of 'some informants' may not sound clear enough to some readers, the use of 'many informants' may not be very representative neither. This ambiguity was resolved by altering the focus of the writing from how many said what to what each of them actually said. The extensiveness of the content of different voices was found far more important than the simplistic generality of the head counting.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA - Effects & Effectiveness of The scheme

Chapter 1 to Chapter 3 have laid down the fundamental background of the study, the relevant theoretical framework, and the research methodology applied in the present study, the second part of the study that covers three data analysis chapters will take us on the journey of discovering what were uttered by the informants and what occurred in their everyday classroom. Covering Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6, this part will make an effort to respectively analyse findings related to each of the three research questions prompted in Chapter 1.2, namely the impact of the scheme, the adjustment of both groups to the new environment, and the factors that hindered or facilitated the outcomes. The findings will be presented in a triangle way with comparison of the relevant findings obtained from the Baptist informants, their Tsing Hua counterparts, and the participant and class observation (See Appendix 3 and Appendix 4 for a brief description of the contexts and scenes extracted).

The present chapter focuses more on the data analysis of the academic influence of the scheme as perceived by both groups so as to answer the three questions in responding to the three objectives of this scheme set in Policy Address 1998 as follows:

1. In what ways have the local students and the Tsing Hua students enriched their ideas and skills through this scheme?

2. In what ways was the 'healthy competition' established between the two groups?

3. In what ways have the local students broadened their horizons on Mainland?

To be exact, this chapter intends to analyze what the informants said about how

much the academic exchange took place among the students of two groups, in what ways and with whom it took place, followed by the examination of the extent of 'healthy competition' established among the two groups and last the exchange of non-academic aspect, namely the Baptist students' horizons on Mainland.

4.1 Experience of Academic Exchange

To get a fuller picture of the academic exchange occurring among members of the two groups, the informants were asked to comment on both their personal experience and the experience of other students in their class or on campus based on what they saw and what they heard.

4.1.1 Asking about assignments

When asked to share whether the Baptist students experienced academic exchange and received direct help from their Tsing Hua counterparts, only four out of the fifteen informants said 'yes', while the rest said 'no' with two of them adding:

> Personally no, but I've seen some of my classmates talk to the Tsing Hua classmates about their assignments. They usually asked them whether they have finished their assignments, or whether they knew how to do it. ... (Paul (HK), H9/22)

This 'simple asking' about each others' assignments seems to be a typical conversation mode when the informants' referred to the academic exchange and help among them since several of them uttered the same phrases as what Lily (HK) did,

> I didn't ask them (the Tsing Hua classmates) to teach me how to do the assignments because we didn't know each other well at all. I found it guilty to ask them. So, I usually asked them how they were doing with their assignments like whether they knew how to do it, and whether the assignments were O.K. to them. (H3/66)

To the Tsing Hua informants, this 'asking about assignment' became one of the major means that bonded some of them together. That was also where the subtle relationship among them emerged. Recalling similar scene, Tang Ziyong (ML) depicted, "they were very active, asking us about assignments. They were more keen on the assignments than on us." (M7/30) Because of the academic difference of the two groups, it is explicable how the local students may depend on their Tsing Hua counterparts when dealing with their academic work, and one of the frequently reported cases is 'borrowing assignment'.

> Yes, if they asked me [for assignment], I would lend it to them, for instance, the report writing. I would give whoever ask me, I didn't care. ... What happened afterwards was beyond my control." (Li Qian (ML) M2/48)

Two other Tsing Hua informants had rather extreme responses to this issue. While Zhou Wen (ML) held that "[classmates] in Physics Department would ask me to show them [my assignment] to check the answer, but those girls would not copy. ... I found these students pretty good. They would not copy," (M4/24-26) Wen Jing Shan (ML), conversely, showed, an opposite view and asserted, "nobody asked about assignments. I found that nobody here would discuss assignments with others. Really, all they would do is to copy." (M3/41) These two accounts seem to have demonstrated two very distinct pictures of the attitudes of the local students as well as a sign of lack of confidence among the local students as Tang Ziyong (ML) found, "anyway, it's always because they don't know how to do it. Also, they'll always ask you for your assignment as an example and refer to it when they do it. Yeah, always." (M7/32)

Findings from the class observation also reveal that unlike what was found during the first round of observation when the Tsing Hua informants had classes with their own group, the discussion of academic studies occurring between members of two groups

before and after class was rarely noted except for the case with Yang Jing (ML) and her local counterparts, which can be explained partly by the very limited time available and partly by the physical distance or to be exact, social distance, among them.

4.1.2 Copying assignments

As mentioned above, a step forward from the casual asking is borrowing the Tsing Hua students' assignments for a look or even for copying.

> [I] first asked [the Tsing Hua classmate] a little bit. Then I would ask them to let me take a look at their assignment. If [I] couldn't understand by a quick glance, [I] would copy the areas that could be copied. (Matthew (HK) (H2/94-96)

He also added that somebody in the class did copy their assignments from one of the Tsing Hua classmates and both got 'zero' mark for that assignment at the end. Two others also acknowledged that they have asked their Tsing Hua classmates for their assignments. The difference is that they did not copy it directly. "I did take a look, but won't copy it because the teacher could tell right away that it was not done by me if I copy the whole thing," Matthew (HK) declared straightforwardly (H8/47). Similar but a slightly more positive story was told by Samuel (HK) who said,

> Yes, I would use his (the Tsing Hua classmate) assignments as a reference. For example, when we have to do a report in which our data treatment is the same, I'll copy his. But, I'll do the discussion part by myself. (H5/116)

When asked whether it would do more harm than good to Samuel (HK), he explained,

> Copy? The most important thing is to learn how to do the experiment. Then, if I don't know how to calculate the data that I copy, I will either ask the teacher or ask him (the Tsing Hua classmate). Since he is more easy-going, I usually ask him. (H5/118)

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Due to the nature and discipline of different major studies, it looks like the 'copying' itself may not necessarily bring harm to students all the time in every case.

Turning to the Tsing Hua informants about the same issue, five out of the eleven agreed that it was common for some of their local counterparts to copy their assignments. This finding appears consistent with what their Baptist counterparts shared above. Two Tsing Hua informants, Tang Ziyong (ML) and Gao Min (ML), respectively reported two particular incidents. As Tang Ziyong (ML) remembered,

> At the beginning of the semester, I forgot which Physics assignment that was. I got zero for no reason. Later I found out that my assignment was copied by someone. Two assignments were exactly the same. I didn't even know who copied my assignment because they simply said that they wanted to take a look at it. (M7/34)

The 'zero' did not really strike Tang Ziyong (ML) since he thought that the student who borrowed his assignment should learn the lesson and that was what mattered about the incident. At the end, the local student who copied Tang's work did reveal himself to him and apologize to him. After that, no one borrowed Tang's assignments any more. In fact, to Tang Ziyong (ML), it was perfectly all right to borrow assignments from others since he thought that usually some classmates simply had no clue themselves. Once they had an idea, they would work on it on their own, which was also common among his peers in Mainland.

Another case happened to three other informants with the same major in the same tutorial group. As Gao Min (ML) portrayed,

> They [The local students] usually even did better than we did since they would borrow the same assignments from all three Tsing Hua members in the Department. Then they would see how different each of our assignments is. Say like one person made a mistake here, while another there. Then they

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would copy all the correct answers in their assignments. When the results were released, very often we got a 'C' or 'B-', whereas they got an 'A'." (M10/36)

Gao Min (ML) further added, "...Also, they may have some local classmates with better academic standard. They would synthesis all this wisdom and create a perfect assignment for themselves." (M10/36)

4.1.2.1 Attitudes towards assignments being borrowed or copied

What may sound amazing are the neutral attitudes of the Tsing Hua informants towards the above two cases. They did not care about what happened. They did not mind getting a poor grade mainly for one thing, the assignments only occupied a very small proportion of the whole assessment, for another, they did not want to ruin their relationship with the local students because of this. That is why they maintained that they would still lend their assignments to their local classmates in future if they were asked to. Speaking two languages and sharing two different cultures, what is fully understood here is the importance of harmony and '*gan shi*' (the word for 'relationship' in Putonghua) among Chinese as Gao Min (ML) implied, "I don't want to ruin our relationship because of this [the unfair result from lending assignments to the Hong Kong counterparts]."

4.1.3 More substantial academic exchange

The above accounts may sound quite negative and discouraging on the one hand, yet, somehow positive on the other hand. At least, members of both groups have started the interaction and communication with each other. Nevertheless, what can be noted is that up to this point the kind of academic discussion that occurred limits to only what was related to the assignments the students had to hand in or tasks they had to work on. A more significant of this kind was found in the in-class problem-solving

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tasks commonly applied in some Science majored classes, shared by Henry (HK).

> Other than the assignments, we will be given some difficult exercises to sort
> out during each tutorial lesson. Each group is basically responsible for one
> item. Maybe we can tell that we (the Tsing Hua classmates and we) belong to
> different levels. After thinking about the exercise for a long time, we began to
> ask our Tsing Hua classmates. Then, they would show us how to do it. We
> then presented it depending on how much we could understand from their
> explanation. (H8/33)

Though the above case cannot be described as a truly 'mutual' intellectual exchange, it has provoked some students of the two groups working together to accomplish a task. This would have been a more encouraging sign of academic exchange among the students if we have not heard what the other informant, Amanda (HK), who attended the same class said.

> I felt that it was them alone who did the exercise. Since we didn't really know
> how to do it, but they could finish it very quickly. They could write you the
> procedures and answer in no time, while we had no idea at all. In reality, it
> turned out that they did it all, we didn't touch it at all. (H8/39)

She continued to allege,

> yes, [we would do it on our own if we did not have the help from the Tsing
> Hua students], but the methods or steps we chose may be totally different from
> the Tsing Hua students'. Maybe it would take us a lot more time or we could
> only finish up to a certain step, stopping in half way. Very often that's what
> happened. (H8/52)

To put it in another way, the Tsing Hua students in the above episode have helped their local counterparts to finish a task, yet, at the same time; have taken away the opportunity for their local classmates to develop their own thoughts and learning to a certain extent. The 'exchange' ultimately turned out to be a one-way giving by the Tsing Hua students instead of the two-ways exchange among them. As Henry (HK), conceded openly, "...we exchanged ideas about the assignments, but what happened was that it actually was 'they gave us', yet we didn't 'give back' in return, no such

thing as 'exchange' at all." (H8/24) Because of the tight class schedule, the students often became so anxious to deal with the tasks assigned and reported to the class in time that they did not have the heart to find out what they could learn from what they were told by their Tsing Hua counterparts.

The only one authentic academic exchanges among the students mentioned did not happen in class, nor did it happen between the Tsing Hua and their Baptist classmates. Instead, it was stirred up in a Poetry Society that one Tsing Hua informant joined through the acquaintance of the Society's homepage. Afterwards, the Tsing Hua informant volunteered to sit in the poetry class that the other members attended. According to Amy (HK), heated and in-depth academic discussions did take place among the members and that Tsing Hua student in class and after class throughout the semesters; yet, the discussions were confined to their particular group itself.

> ...They would make poems and exchange ideas together ... only among
> themselves because they (the Tsing Hua student who sat in the class and those
> in the Poetry Society)...but [the Tsing Hua student] won't [discuss the study]
> with others ...won't even smile to you, very obvious ... No, he won't.
> (H1/129-140)

Other than the above report, not much significant sign of the genuine interest in learning was noticed among the Baptist students involved.

4.1.4 Academic exchange noted in in-class group activities

The small group activities found in the class observation disclose more concrete evidence for academic exchange among students of the two groups, but also draw our attention to the lack of social competence among the students. To start the analysis, we will first scrutinize the role of the Tsing Hua students in a group

activity, followed by their Baptist counterparts' reaction and response to their role from which we can see how the academic exchange and competition emerged.

4.1.4.1 The role the Tsing Hua students play – starter and action taker

A glance at the six class observations shows that the Tsing Hua students in the present study usually played a leading role in small group activities among their local counterparts. The Tsing Hua students were often found to be the self-starters who started a group discussion or activity by either sharing their answers first or asking questions. For instance, in Observation 1, Lin Feng (ML) gave out the points he obtained from the reading he was given. He went, "Paragraph 1, what do you want to discuss?" He was so direct that he sounded like a teacher to his members. In Observation 2, Tang Ziyong (ML) and Zhou Wen (ML) respectively took the initiative to read out the discussion questions to other members in the group and initiated the discussion after all the group members finished their individual work by sharing his answers first. This initiative was found no less obvious with Zheng Wenshan (ML) in Observation 3 who asked his members for their comments first.

Other than starting an activity, the Tsing Hua students were also the action takers who carried on the activities by taking necessary actions swiftly. For example, in Observation 1, after discussing the key points to put in an outline, Lin Feng (ML) voluntarily wrote the ideas on the transparency for the teacher to check on the projector, showed the transparency to his members and asked whether they had other ideas to add. Similar action was taken by Tang Ziyong (ML) in Observation 2 who stood up and wanted to write the answers on the board right away when the teacher asked the class to select a member from each group to put down the answers on the board. Zheng Wenshan (ML) in Observation 3 also continued to lead the discussion

by going down the questions one by one as the discussion went on. In a word, they were usually the ones who kept the activities going, while their local counterparts seemed to follow along, but responded differently to their leadership.

4.1.4.2 Reaction and response to the division of roles – a contrast of two cases

Different local students reacted differently to the Tsing Hua students' leading role partly depending on how each Tsing Hua individual presented their headship, and partly how the local students perceived that. The several episodes mentioned earlier, the discussion with Lin Feng (ML) as the leader in Observation 1, those with Tang Ziyong (ML) and Zhou Wen (ML) in Observation 2, and Zheng Wenshan (ML) in Observation 3 formed a sharp contrast. As mentioned earlier, Lin Feng (ML) started the discussion by giving out the ideas he found relevant from his article reading. When he was challenged by one of his local counterparts in the group, he stuck to his opinions became louder and dominant in the discussion afterward. He challenged his group members about the thesis statement they found it appropriate to put in the outline of this essay. When his local counterpart suggested it, he brought out his own ideas. The conversation went back and forth in between what Lin Feng (ML) raised and what his members thought as they continued to complete the outline paragraph by paragraph. One of the members who disagreed with what Lin Feng (ML) said finally got impatient and put his head down, showing some kinds of resentment. As Lin Feng (ML) refused to compromise and suggested that they have as many paragraphs as they liked, one of the local counterparts got very impatient with Lin Feng (ML) and put his head down. He soon rose and turned to his local group members in Cantonese, which put Lin Feng (ML) into silence since he could not understand Cantonese. Having said that, in most cases, the local students went along well with only a few showing resentment.

The Tsing Hua students' active involvement, on the contrary, has gained their local counterparts' support and cooperation in most other cases observed. For example, all Tang Ziyong (ML), Zhou Wen (ML), and Zheng Wenshan (ML) had pretty harmonious discussion and negotiation with their local counterparts. They had different opinions, yet they were able to negotiate with each other and came up with the final conclusion together. For example, while Tang Ziyong (ML) in Observation 2 was representing the group to write down the answers on the board, his other member, Zhou Wen (ML), continued to negotiate with the other two local counterparts and they all went very cheerful when they saw what they have achieved together. Zheng Wenshan (ML) in Observation 3, guiding another discussion in another class, may have sounded quite authoritative to his group members as he took the initiative to ask the members about their comments on the topic discussing, went through and clarified the key points, and challenged the members by saying, "What do you mean by that?" and "Why not?" Yet, he has stirred up the discussion and inspired his local counterparts to give their opinions. As his local counterparts wondered, "how come Hong Kong doesn't have any disasters?", Zheng Wenshan (ML) argued that "there are disasters – typhoon." Obviously, they had a different perception of what disaster is and observation of what happened; they, however, were able to share what they knew and keep the exchange of information going on cordially under the guidance of Zheng Wenshan (ML). What is found common about Lin Feng (ML) and Zheng Wenshan (ML) is that they both spoke louder, appeared more active and authoritative, yet they differed from each other in terms of their tone and attitude. Zheng Wenshan (ML) sounded more pleasant and willing to accept what his local counterparts expressed, while Lin Feng (ML) simply refused to negotiate, not to say compromise. This different attitude directly brought the intellectual exchanges to a different ending.

4.2 Fostering of Healthy Competition

4.2.1 Initial, yet unsustainable encouragement

Corresponding to the second objective of the scheme proposed in Policy Address 1998, the data analysis of this section aims to explore the competitive aroused between the two groups in this new learning context. As indicated in the problem-solving group task depicted in Chapter 4.1.3, the academic gap between the two groups has caused practical difficulty and discouragement among some of the local students. It, however, did not bring every local student down psychologically. In fact, a range of most positive to most negative responses was voiced with one of them remaining neutral. The most common positive response is like the one by Lily (HK) who said, "I have been encouraged by him (one of her Tsing Hua classmates) to a certain extent." (H3/160) Prompted for more details about the actual change of action and academic improvement, she said,

> a little bit. Since you know the whole class's academic results are good, there's no way you'll see yourself be lagged behind and stay poor. For sure, you'll try to catch up with them. If you haven't thought about being one of the best, at least, you would want to reach the average level. That's how I thought, so I try to do better. (H3/163)

Similar to Lily (HK), Paul (HK) also claimed,

> I think this (the academic gap) should post positive [impact on our study]. I would think that probably they are so high (academic level), while I am so low. That means I should be more hardworking and make more effort, hoping that I can do better. If the whole class remains this poor all the time, I will lose the drive to climb up the ladder. However, if there's one with extremely high level, I feel that we should catch up with him. (H9/54)

The Tsing Hua students' unusually outstanding academic results and industriousness have soon formed a sharp contrast with their Baptist counterparts', especially with some Science majored students who entered the University with a sub-standard Advanced level result. As the two groups proceeded their study in the same

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classroom day by day, the Tsing Hua students' presence has naturally stimulated some of their counterparts.

> ... Sometimes I see him (one of the Tsing Hua classmates) being so hardworking. I will then look at myself, wondering how come the Hong Kong students have such a distant academic gap compared to them. I did have some reflection like this. Lily (HK) H3/86

Having said that, the most common response to the comments on whether the Tsing Hua informants' terrific academic performance has formed a positive drive for the Baptist informants to work harder on their studies is what Lily (HK) disclosed, "a little bit, to a certain extent." (H3/160) Paul (HK) has exemplified this previously. When queried whether this reinforcement of his learning motivation has been realized into practical action, he divulged,

> I think there were some psychological effects, but action taken... some, but not much... Since I think [the Tsing Hua students] left their family and study alone out here, the attitudes and mentality they hold must be different from ours. They will concentrate on their studies, while we may have a lot of social activities and friends to be with. We will also usually organize some extra-curricular activities. The way we think is totally different... (H9/56-58)

In a nutshell, Paul (HK) recapped, "...whether I would study harder because of the presence of the Tsing Hua students? A little bit, but not that much." (H9/64) Amy (HK) expressed her negative comments on competing with the Tsing Hua counterpart, who sat in her class in this way,

> The competition should be a positive one...More classmates will voice their opinions in class, not wanting Tang Ziyong (ML) to share his thoughts all the time. Otherwise, we will lose the proportion of the score we get by sharing our opinions in class...that's why we need to compete with each other. (H1/92 & 76)

The Tsing Hua counterpart's zeal to participating in class in the above case did drive his Baptist counterparts to compete with him in this case under the system set to

ensure class participation, but whether Amy (HK) did see the competition positively or not is another story.

4.2.2 'No competition'

As illustrated by the responses displayed above, some Baptist students have strengthened their learning motivation and initiated their healthy competition with their Tsing Hua counterparts, while others have cried out their discouragement and even frustration. "Competition? No...I think their level is too high...seems too incredible...So, I just study the same way as I used to." Matthew (HK), H2/66, 70, 74 Katherine (HK) also said, "...Sometimes her (the Tsing Hua counterpart) academic results are much too bright. Some in the class who appeared far behind her will really somehow lose their hearts..." (H6/34) This sense of 'no competition' and 'incomparable' was also voiced by Frank (HK) and Patricia (HK) who respectively articulated,

> ...since one Tsing Hua student has already outperformed almost all [the local classmates]. Though she hasn't taken many of the subjects before, she still was able to catch up," and "I think [this is because] she has a solid science foundation...But, once I heard the name 'Tsing Hua', I know [she] must be very bright. No way to compete, thinking that they were not only one of those from Tsing Hua, but the brighter ones selected from Tsing Hua, certainly they are the elites. How can [we] compete with them? (H10/29)

Having said that, both Frank (HK) and Patricia (HK) did not appear as upset with their Tsing Hua counterparts as some others since Frank (HK) did not know his Tsing Hua counterpart very well, whereas Patricia (HK) had the following thought,

> [I] think [you] have to rely on yourself to study... I used to have some friends who studied very well. We went to the library to study together. Although they got very good results, entering the Hong Kong University, I still ended up the same. (H10/43-45)

Not every informant, however, was found as sensible and lighthearted as Frank (HK)

and Patricia (HK). An obvious frustration was found with the other weaker students like Amanda (HK), who acknowledged,

> I almost admitted that I am defeated...Sometimes I would think how come they could finish the [Mathematics] tasks so quickly. How come we couldn't make it. Sometimes, I felt that only they could make it. There's no way that we would be able to do it. (H8/101-103)

Being in the same class, Henry (HK) shared Amanda's (HK) thought; yet appearing less depressed.

> I thought the same way; I have already admitted that I have lost. Having lost the game is one thing, giving up is the other. I wouldn't give up. That means we would think that those who obtain 'A' and 'first honor' must be them (the Tsing Hua classmates). But there's no limited number for the candidate to obtain 'first honor'. O.K. If I work harder, I might have a chance to get it as well. (H8/104)

Like Henry (HK), many local students seemed to have experienced having their hopes of catching up raised and then dashed as at the end he agreed, "...Undoubtedly, I think Mathematics is very tricky. If you have the gut, you'll have an idea to solve the task, if not, you won't. It's very hard to be improved simply by working hard." (H8/104) Although such frustration was not commonly spread among the Baptist informants, it is strong in the case itself and has severely affected students like Amanda (HK) and Henry (HK)'s local classmates. Their spirits have been dampened during the in-class group task as described in last section and the question and answer session in their everyday tutorial lessons partly because partly because of their academic gap and partly due to the language used by their Tsing Hua counterparts and their teacher communicated which will be detailed in Chapter 6.4.1.2. Putting aside the question of academic competition in this case, we can see what actually underlay was a sense of competition for class time and opportunity to learn, and what is more, a destruction of confidence and learning motivation as they were facing similar situations whenever they attended the same course.

4.2.3 Unhealthy competition

Throughout the examination of the findings relating to competition partly because of their academic gap between the two groups, only two direct negative competitions were found visible respectively in the interview data and class observation. As Katherine (HK), a local informant majored in Accounting with more students at a higher academic level than that of the Science faculties, explained how some of her classmates coped with this increase of competition brought by the Tsing Hua counterparts:

> ... a little bit hostile .... For example, since Yang Jing (ML) is so bright ...Some [local classmates] would intentionally hide their progress ...[Some of my classmates] did not want us to have the same progress of revision. So, they often said, 'Oh, no, the test is coming but I haven't studied yet, I haven't studied at all.' So, when I heard that I would think that I might delay my revision as well since my other classmates haven't started yet. But actually, those classmates would have studied secretively, while Yang Jing (the Tsing Hua counterpart in her class) would not be like this. She often went to the Library, hooking on to the books. (H6/48-58)

In other words, to compete with the Tsing Hua counterpart in the class, some of Katherine (HK)'s classmates deliberately formed a negative studying atmosphere making others feel that they did not need to study very hard neither.

Coincidentally, findings of a class observation also support that Yang Jing (ML)'s dedication to study seemed to have aroused unknown enmity. In Observation 4, an economic tutorial, when the teacher was trying to refer to what he was talking about with how it was explained in the textbook, he said, "In which chapter was 'consumer circle' discussed?" Yang Jing (ML) responded almost in no time at her seat, saying, "Chapter 4", which was right. However, as Yang Jing (ML) listened to the teacher while he continued his explanation, one local counterpart sitting closer to the back of the classroom suddenly uttered "Chapter 9" at his seat with a tone of opposition and

impatience. As this local counterpart should have heard the teacher's response to Yang Jing (ML)'s answer, he should have learnt that 'Chapter 4' was correct. Why he went on with another try and went protesting? Although no easy conclusion can be drawn without this student's confirmation and explanation, this incident can imply a slight 'unhealthy competition' among students of the two groups. Other than the academic competition the Tsing Hua students have brought to their local counterparts, what also came along were the competition for the opportunity for participation, and more sensitively, the competition for the teacher's attention.

4.3 Broadening the Horizons on Mainland

4.3.1 Exchange of ideas about Mainland in daily conversation

Other than the academic arena, the present scheme also attempts to let the local students know more about Mainland through the mouths of their Tsing Hua counterparts. When asked whether the Baptist informants got to learn more about the Mainland from their Tsing Hua counterparts, an overwhelming number of them responded negatively except for two of them. "No because I was seldom with them," Katherine (HK) said. (H6/106-108) Samuel (HK) also acknowledged, "no, temporarily no because our contact is very superficial." (H5/82) This brought out the cultural and social hindrance among the communication among students of the two groups. As Paul (HK) put it,

> maybe it's because of [our] different background ...it's hard to communicate
> with each other...feel kind of incompatible. ...Usually [we had] some casual
> talks ...like 'you are from Tsing Hua? How do you like Hong Kong?' Very
> trivial, only one or two sentences, won't be long or detailed. (H9/4-8)

Some others knew more about Mainland, but limited to the personal experience of their Tsing Hua counterparts. "...a little bit ...I asked which school they attended back then, where they are from, so on," Matthew (HK) said. (H2/156 & 152) Lily

(HK) also cited, "I asked them whether they have studied this or that in their science subject." (H3/102) This, however, appeared much better than what Amanda (HK) experienced in which she found, "they left very quickly. After class, they disappeared right away. I seldom bumped into them on campus." (H8/110) In this case, Amanda (HK) did not even have a chance to start a conversation.

4.3.2 Classroom teaching as a mean

Surprisingly, what led the two groups to talk about Mainland was when the discussions in class happened to relate to Mainland issues.

> "I think actually the English lessons have provided us with an opportunity because from time to time the discussion topics are associated with Mainland..." Henry (HK), (H8/124)

Similar to Henry (HK), Patricia (HK) found,

> ...in the Economics lesson, the lecture was about China's economy. So, they told us after the reform, China has developed a lot. Then, they recited a paragraph of things related to how China's economy has improved. Curiously, I asked them whether they do think that China's economy has improved a lot, while they told me some areas did and some didn't. I then asked how come Hong Kong people always said that the Mainland people still work very routinely, earning the same amount of money no matter they work harder or not...but, after class we seldom talked about this. (H10/57)

Lacking a common language in terms of the content and genre, and more important, the same perceptions as disclosed above, students of the two groups had rather limited and superficial communication, let alone in-depth discussions on issues about the places they are from.

4.4 Effectiveness of the Scheme

4.4.1 Positive response

The informants' responses to the last question in the interview concerning the effectiveness of the scheme and the enhancement of the local students' learning motivation have partly made known by their ideas on the outcomes of the academic exchange and healthy competition between the two groups. When asked directly, only two of the informants out of the fifteen held a positive view. As Frank (HK) and Paul (HK), respectively affirmed, "there should be, more or less. At least you'll see someone being so bright in the front. Besides, you can tell, as a Mainlander, he/she could study so well, which will boost others to study harder," (H10/100) while Paul (HK) went, "yes, there should be certain effect, but I can't say whether the effect will be large or not". (H9/63) Samuel (HK) actually agreed with the idea of introducing Mainland students in university in Hong Kong, but he could not see the effectiveness with the present scheme because:

> if you simply bring in a group of Mainland students like this, there should be no effect...For instance, if you put a group of Mainland students and leave them here to compete in the job market, that would be more effective as you may feel that you are not as capable, nor do you speak several languages or maintain good academic results. That way you'll naturally put more effort into your study and work harder... (H5/124)

What has to be made clear here is that the policy of permitting the undergraduate to stay and work upon their graduation was still not broadcasted at the time when these interviews were conducted. That is why Samuel put forwards such a point.

Similar to these Baptist students, a few Tsing Hua counterparts felt positively about the effectiveness of the scheme, while a larger majority did not think so. With enthusiasm, Zhou Wen (ML) said, "yes, of course [it is effective] since suddenly

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there are very top students among them." (M4/80) Others expected there will be certain boosting effect based on their past experience like Lin Feng's (ML).

> I think it should be useful. I think our presence creates some pressure on them. Because when I was in Beijing, ... how should I put it... I had similar experience. That is to say... I think there should be more pressure for them in this case. If I look at it from their perspective, I see there's a group of students coming to study from Mainland, same as we do, they are working on the three years major study, for sure, I'll feel the pressure because after three years, they may grab our job, or they may have a better chance to further their study at Baptist which occupies the place of the local students. (M11/68)

Other than the presence of pressure, the establishment of a new target is another factor as Tang Ziyong (ML) assumed,

> There should be some [effects]. Well, how should I put it. In some courses, we might not be the real centre, but they may find us the virtual centre. That is to say that at least they would regard us as their target in terms of academic performance. If their academic results are not too far from ours, they may find it pretty good. I think they may be more hardworking to study than before. (M7/78)

However, more concrete evidence was only given by Gao Min (ML) who observed,

> Actually I think among my classmates, I think there're still some, more or less, who got influenced [by us], no matter they like it or not ... at least they think there is a little bit effect. Whether the effect is big or not is hard to say, depending on each individual. To a male student [in my class], I think it (our presence) has a great effect on him ... (M10/68)

She then continued to analyze the effect on the weaker students by saying that "...But to those students with a poorer academic results, I think [there should be] no effect because whether the class has someone with good academic results or not, their goal is to pass ...That's why to some students it really doesn't matter." (M10/68)

4.4.2 Negative response

Nevertheless, like Amanda (HK) and Wen Jingshan (ML), a larger majority from both sides could not see how the scheme practically worked. As Amanda (HK) put, "not feasible unless the academic level of the local students and that of the Tsing Hua students is closer. But, if the gap is too big, I don't think many [local students] would be encouraged." (H8/144) Seeing eye to eye with Amanda (HK), Henry (HK) found,

> the way I think is that we won't give up ourselves because of their presence. But, we won't become more hardworking just because of their presence neither. Of course, I can't deny that some may have improved their studies because of their presence. But, at the end, I think the influence may not be that large. (H8/147)

Patricia (HK) also doubted about the effectiveness and gave her reasons:

> I can't tell since I think that Hong Kong students like to join school societies and organize activities. To me the impact is not visible. On the contrary, I'm more easily influenced by the bunch of local students I am always with. Even though one of them may be very bright academically, and others want to catch up. But some others may say 'don't worry; the most important thing is to get a pass. It'll be all right as long as we study together happily.' So, [I] don't care much. (H10/102)

Parallel to these responses were some Tsing Hua counterparts' hesitation and reservation. Liu Kun (ML) found that the effect "should be very minimal" (M9/50) and maintained a reservation attitude, while Liang Ming (ML) also raised his doubts by saying, "I think the effect is not as good as they expected. They must think we are very good. But sometimes we skip class too ..." (M3/80) Yang Jing (ML) offered some reasons for their gloomy views and said, "[they (the local classmates) said] how come you're so hardworking, but [they don't say] I should be more hardworking too ...(M1/56) Maybe it's because I was the only one in the business school, I don't find the effect very obvious ..." Conversely, Su Jin (ML) found the

Tsing Hua students being affected by their local peers and explained,

> maybe when there are more people (Mainland students), the outcome will be
> better. [When we have] only two or three, three persons in one class, I can
> hardly say 'we influence them.' It's them influencing us. (M8/82)

4.4.3 Other provoking thoughts

The most interesting and thought-provoking idea is probably Katherine (HK)'s view:

> [I] don't mean that the scheme is ineffective, but I find it not appropriate...It
> could be effective with some students closer to [the Tsing Hua students]. They
> may study together when they face some problems. But, that group of students
> is actually not many. As there are seven universities in Hong Kong, each
> university has its own academic level...the level of our students is more or less
> the same. If you suddenly introduce some with extremely bright academic
> results, it will widen the gap. (H6/118)

She also pointed out that one costly price of the scheme is the waste of the Tsing Hua

students' talent and gift. "Also, it will waste the Tsing Hua students. They should

pursue a higher level in another university..." (H6/118) From Katherine (HK)'s

point of view,

> ... Motivating the local students? Actually, I think whether one can study well
> depends largely on himself...Maybe the Government wants to encourage the
> local students to study harder, but introducing others into the university to
> motivate the local students is not necessary. (H6/130)

Wen Jingshan (ML), one of the Tsing Hua informants, also expressed this

'unnecessary' point of view by saying, "it seems that there is no such need."

(M3/79)

In other words, the Baptist informants could rationally see how the Tsing Hua

students should and might motivate some local students to a certain extent, but

practically saw no strong evidence. Some could only speculate the possibility under

two major conditions, namely the narrower academic gap between the local students and the Tsing Hua students, as well as the closer relationship among them. Under the present circumstance, many of the informants found the effort in vain with some even considering the Tsing Hua students who joined the scheme as sacrifices of the scheme. Comparatively speaking, though some of their Tsing Hua counterparts shared more positive thoughts, some still found the probability of the success of the scheme low. Unlike their Baptist counterparts, the reason they held was the very limited number of Tsing Hua students placed in each department in comparison with the larger group of local students.

Summary

To conclude, the above findings illustrate that, from the Baptist informants' perspective, there existed some academic exchanges between them and their Tsing Hua counterparts, but confined to a small number with very few substantial ones. Because of the rather restricted communication and distant relationship, their intellectual discussions and collaborations were no more than casual asking, scanning assignments and a few intellectual discussions. Moreover, most of the time, these intellectual exchanges were found one-way instead of two-way exchange due to the different academic level between the two groups. The only account reported as authentic mutual exchange of intellectual ideas actually started within an interest group outside the regular classroom between one Tsing Hua informant and other Baptist students with the same interest. This initial attempt did arouse more discussion among some other local counterparts later in the class, but still limited to a cluster of the members belonging to the interest group and in-class designated tasks.

The enhancement of the learning motivation and thus stirring of healthy competition

seem to have had more effect due to the Tsing Hua students' presence since generally most Baptist informants were amazed and encouraged by their Tsing Hua counterparts' stupendous academic performance, and boosted their incentive to study harder. This preliminary ambition, however, was not well sustained and did not turn out to be action in the long term mainly due to peer pressure and the academic gap. We may realize that the Tsing Hua students and their exceptional academic results have definitely set a new target and model for their local counterparts, on the contrary, what is equally important to note is that the distinct different academic level has also driven some others to give up. The gratitude of being able to study with some high-fliers like the Tsing Hua students can motivate their local counterparts one day, but discourage them another day, after they apprehended how far they were lagged behind and after they have talked to their local peers and turned back to what they believed about studying.

Lastly, the Tsing Hua students' presence did spark some local students' interests in China and triggered them to learn something in between the learning and teaching in class. Unfortunately, again due to their distant relationship, students of both groups did not seem to have mastered the opportunity to know more about their motherland, China. The Tsing Hua students' accompany did not serve as a better channel for the local students to explore China at the stage again due to their limited communication.

Coherent to the findings on the rather unsatisfactory outcomes of the scheme in the three aspects mentioned above, a larger majority of informants of the both sides found the scheme not very effective mainly because of the academic gap between the two groups, their restricted communication and distant relationship, and the inadequate number of Tsing Hua students in each class. Most of those who found the plan feasible and effective were based on their assumption and past experience of

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being motivated under pressure, and the new and high target set by others. Only one or two of them put forward concrete examples to illustrate the improvement they perceived among their counterparts as influenced by the presence of the Tsing Hua students.

CHAPTER 5 ANALYSIS OF DATA - Adjustment of Both Groups

Having presented the analysis of academic impact of the scheme on the students of both groups in Chapter 4, this chapter will then continue the investigation by addressing findings related to the second research question, "how did the Mainland as well as the Hong Kong students adjust to each other in the new contextual and cultural environment?" Findings in this aspect will be divided into two parts, with Part 1 focusing on the Tsing Hua informants' adjustment to the new learning and cultural environment, and Part 2 the Baptist counterparts' adjustments to the changed contextual environment. Based on the features of the evidences gathered, a large proportion of the findings analysis from the Baptist informants' perspective will be related to their perception of the difference between the two groups. To explore the Tsing Hua informants' adjustment issue more thoroughly, the analysis will also start with their prior perception since their earlier knowledge and perceived conception are closely tied with their subsequent adjustment. These portrayals of both groups' perception will be followed by their virtual experience, the adjustment difficulties they faced, and the strategies they applied to cope with the change.

5.1 Tsing Hua Students' Adjustment to the New Learning and Cultural Environment

As shown in the findings, the Tsing Hua students have experienced adjustment in both the learning context and the living and cultural environment. The present section therefore starts with the Tsing Hua students' adjustment experience to the new academic context, and the second part deals with their adjustment difficulties in the new living and cultural environment by first reporting their general responses, their first 'shock' and emotional disturbance, and the practical adjustment

difficulties. We shall now see what the Tsing Hua informants thought about studying in Hong Kong.

5.1.1 Prior perception of studying in Hong Kong

Responding to how the Tsing Hua students anticipated studying in Hong Kong before they came, three of the Tsing Hua informants had no clues at all, while the others respectively commented on the study pressure, the learning facilities, the students and the course curriculum, among which the two most frequently mentioned impression were 'less pressure' and 'better learning facilities'.

5.1.1.1 Less pressure and better facilities

Most Tsing Hua informants thought that the students in Hong Kong should receive less pressure on their study than those in Mainland China. "Before I came to Hong Kong, I found that studying in Hong Kong should be more relaxing," Gao Min (ML) predicted. (M10/2) Liang Ming (ML) also agreed, "the study pressure maybe much less than that in Tsing Hua University." (M3/4) Yang Jing (ML) expanded this by attaching:

> I thought studying in Hong Kong should not be so tense. But compared with Mainland, the English here should be more difficult. I also expected that the English level of the people here would be very high, higher than those in Mainland ...Their Chinese, Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry may be weaker. (M1/2)

Another commonly described impression about studying in Hong Kong is the better facilities. As Lin Feng (ML) said, "Yes, I had a bit ideas. I thought Hong Kong has a better learning condition." (M11/2) Similar to Lin Feng (ML), Liu Kun (ML) also put, "I think the learning facilities in Hong Kong should be better, more resources ..." (M9/2) Speaking of the students in Hong Kong, another informant, Li Qian

(ML) assumed that "most [Hong Kong] students do not like to study very much. Some of them don't want to study..." (M2/2)

5.1.2 Virtual experience of studying in Hong Kong

Having studied at the Hong Kong Baptist University for a year, the Tsing Hua informants have naturally acquired a clearer picture of the real situation. While most still found that students here were under less pressure, others like Zhou Wen (ML) argued,

> The classes seemed quite easy for me to handle, but I didn't find it relaxing at
> all since I depended on myself to study. We had fewer classes, so we had less
> experience. ... Also, I felt like I kept going here and there everyday, extremely
> busy with a lot of things to learn. (M4/2-4)

Similar to Zhou Wen (ML), Zheng Wen Shan (ML) also concurred and said, " I felt that we had so much to learn everyday, seemed very extensive, but not solid enough." (M5/4)

5.1.2.1 Perception of the learning environment – 'hardware and software'

When describing the learning environment in Hong Kong, they clearly split their comments as 'hardware' and 'software' to indicate how they felt about the learning facilities and the learning atmosphere in Hong Kong.

'Hardware' – learning facilities

Regarding the learning facilities in Hong Kong, they all agreed that the learning facilities like computers, the search engines in the library, classroom and other school facilities were much better than those in Mainland. As Zheng Wen Shan (ML) said, "the 'hardware' was much better than that of Tsing Hua University, but not the 'software', not enough time, very rushed." (M5/6) Seeing eye to eye, Yang Jing (ML) also found "the learning resources such as computers, having exchanges

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with the outside academic fields, are pretty good. ..." (M1/10) Ironically, Gao Min (ML) illustrated her comments on the quality of the Library as follows:

> The learning facilities are pretty good. I actually think that the learning condition here is better than that in Tsing Hua University, but maybe what I mean is that studying here is not necessarily better than studying in Tsing Hua University. It's only when you talk about things that you need to use like the library; you may find it easier to find a seat. Since the Library in Tsing Hua is very big, but the University has a lot of students, it's hard for you to grab a seat. I had to get up early at seven and run over to the Library to occupy a seat. (M10/8)

'Software' – learning atmosphere

When turning to the 'software' of the learning environment, a few of them gave some positive comments. For example, they mentioned that they had more opportunities to experience academic exchange with people from other institutes and more exposure to computer and finance studies. Yet, they had equivalent strong ideas about the negative part of the "software" of the learning environment in Hong Kong. They particularly gave remarks on the weak learning atmosphere on campus. Both Liang Ming (ML) and Wen Jing Shan (ML) indicated, "the learning atmosphere is not good," (M3/11), while Tang Ziyong (ML) bluntly admitted, "the environment makes people become lazy easily." They found most of the local students not academic enough and all they want to do is to find a job after their graduation. "I found that Hong Kong students would not think about academic expedition. They don't want to devote themselves nor make an effort in the academic aspect," Wen Jing Shan (ML) contemplated. (M3/12) No wonder both Yang Jing (ML) and Liang Ming (ML) noted that securing a seat in the Library did not guarantee them with a good environment as they found that "... the students are pretty noisy." (M3/14) "...Especially during the end of the semester, students over there [the Library] kept chatting. I couldn't find a place that I could study," Liang Ming (ML) also said.

(M3/14) However, what is worth mentioning in this case is that ten out of the eleven Tsing Hua students majored in the science subjects. What happened was that usually the local students who entered the science majors were with relatively poorer academic results since the sciences were one of the least popular majors in Hong Kong due to the business-oriented job market. Thus, their learning motivation was relatively low. That is to say, on the one hand, what the Tsing Hua students felt was true, on the other hand, it was true in the particular context they were in.

Looking at the 'software' of the learning environment by comparing the relationship between the study environment and the field one studies, some found if one wanted to strive for academic excellence in the science field, Tsing Hua University was still going to be a much more suitable place for him because of its closed learning environment. As Li Qian (ML) put it,

> I think studying, for example, science in Tsing Hua University is better than in Hong Kong since the learning environment there is rather close. Students do need that kind of difficult environment and hardship. I think if one wants to do research, Tsing Hua would be a better place. ..." (M2/4)

Along the same line, Gao Min (ML) found the shopping in Hong Kong a great temptation for her to concentrate on her study. "To me, the worst thing is that I like hanging out and shopping." (M10/10) Consequently, the struggle for quite a few of the Tsing Hua informants was like what Tang Ziyong (ML) cited, "the learning facilities are better, but the environment makes one become lazy pretty easily". (M7/4) This can chiefly explain why few of them held a reservation attitude when asked whether they found the Hong Kong learning experience a positive one. As Lin Feng (ML) went when asked whether he would recommend others in Tsing Hua University to join this scheme,

> to me, I think it all depends on each individual's personality. If that person is

more independent and has a strong self-discipline, I think he/she should come. Hong Kong is a good place. But if he/she does not hold a strong self-discipline, he/she should not come. (M11/86)

5.1.2.2 Tsing Hua informants' perceptions of the students in Hong Kong

After being with the local students for one semester, the Tsing Hua informants also seemed to understand their local counterparts better and have a clearer picture of the local students' learning attitude and their personality.

Learning attitudes

Though the students in Hong Kong were generally found to have little interest in their study, some Tsing Hua informants found some exceptions among their local counterparts after they had a chance to study with them. "Yeah, after I came here, I found the local students studying pretty hard. ...Some of them studied harder though most of them still liked to have fun," Lin Feng (ML) noted. (M11/6) Besides, almost half of the group felt that the local students were often occupied by their coursework. As Zhou Wen (ML) observed, "yes, they looked very busy. Like my teacher said, 'they are busy with their assignments everyday.' They need to spend two or three days to work on one assignment." (M4/14) Some informants, thus, doubted about the effectiveness of the local students' study.

> it seems that they are always busy with their studies from day till night, but it's hard to tell the results. ... They are not very relaxed, pretty busy actually. But it seems that their academic results are not very good. Tang Ziyong (ML) (M7/12-14)

What the above informants seem to indicate is that the local students did try hard, but the objective environment like the education system fails to facilitate them to achieve what they are supposed to. Contrary to these comments, Wen Jing Shan (ML) found that many of the local students seldom studied or there was even no such a word

"study" in their dictionary.

Personality – warm, kind, but practical

Having said that the local students were found usually to lack of interest in their study, the Tsing Hua informants responded very positively to the personality of their local counterparts. What were most frequently cited were their warm and kind personalities. Like Tang Ziyong (ML) recalled, "pretty good, they are pretty warm to us. 'Warm towards us' is my major impression." (M7/10) Also, they appeared more active and fun, having more social activities, as Zheng Wen Shan (ML) and Zhou Wen (ML) said. However, they seemed "too quiet especially in the language class with very little intention to answer questions," Zheng Wen Shan (ML) found. (M5/6) Only when the examinations were approaching would the local students ask more questions, according to Yang Jing (ML) who found it surprising and stated,

> They are pretty practical. ... especially during the last two lessons of the semester when the examinations are approaching. Very obviously, each of them would ask the teacher bluntly for tips and target areas to study for the examinations. We have never done this before. That's why I was pretty surprised, wondering why every of them could be that practical... (M1/12)

It seems that they sat for the examinations only for the sake of having examinations. The last comment in this arena is the craze of shopping of some of her local male counterparts as strongly expressed by Gao Min (ML). "I found that the male classmates are more crazy about shopping than my female classmates. ..." (M10/14) She then clarified that it could be a wrong conception of other local students since coincidently the classmates closer to her were all fond of shopping. This reminds us of the representativeness of the findings. While what the informants stated did demonstrate what they experienced, what they experienced could be only part of the whole picture.

5.1.3 Adjustment difficulties encountered in academic aspect

Having explored the Tsing Hua students' preceding perception and what they thought after their stay, we are ready to delve into the adjustment problems they faced in the academic aspect. When talking about the Tsing Hua students studying in Hong Kong, many may think that they unquestionably had no problem with their high learning motivation and solid academic foundation. However, the findings reveal that the Tsing Hua students did face some difficulties in adjusting to the new learning context in Hong Kong especially during the beginning of the transition. Although the adjustment difficulties in this aspect was not as frequently and commonly mentioned as the adjustment problems to the living and cultural aspects, the potential influence could be much more profound, as those who raised it stated. Other than the difficulty in reading English textbooks implied by a few of them, four deeply felt and discussed adjustment problems were their adjustment to the curriculum with the Hong Kong context, the flexibility of course selection, the institutional policy, and the accessibility of teachers for helping students. These have sparked particular concern from Li Qian (ML), Lin Feng (ML) and Yang Jing (ML) who respectively found the current arrangement inadequate and at times unacceptable. Lin Feng (ML) felt very strong about the difficulty in bridging the gap between the curriculum in Mainland and that in Hong Kong and exposed,

> ...Because I think that the transition between the secondary and tertiary level in Mainland and Hong Kong is different. In Hong Kong, students learn a lot in their A-level (Form 7). But in Mainland we haven't learnt that much. So, I have to learn what I haven't by myself. It's quite a burden to me. (M11/88)

He went on to discern and suggested,

> Yes, that's why the local students can tell what the teacher is talking about once the teacher mentions it and the ins and outs of something. But, to me, I don't understand. I have to go home and check the books. After this half a year, I think... it's not a small task...if someone can prepare some materials

like a course to bridge the gap between the secondary studies in the Mainland
and the A-level in Hong Kong. That would be great. (M11/90)

A similar issue observed was the academic terminology the local teachers used in their classroom teaching. As she recalled,

> ...There're some English terms that I don't understand. For example, the
> teacher said ... Maybe many of my classmates have learnt those terms in their
> secondary school, like the business subjects ...that have some special terms. ...
> while I really didn't know what they were. (M1/58)

Since almost all the Baptist students had their secondary school locally, they took similar subjects with similar texts in which a common group of terms were used. Evidently, those terms were not known by the Tsing Hua students. To cope with this difference and the difficulties mentioned above, in most cases, the Tsing Hua informants turned to the Library instead of their local counterparts and revised what they lacked on their own. This may not sound such a problem for the Tsing Hua students as they are very good at self-study, but some of the Tsing Hua informants did find it a major area they had to adjust.

Along the same line, the other side of the story is that the Tsing Hua students may have learnt what was included in their Year 1 curriculum already in their secondary school learning that their local counterparts have not. Unfortunately, the current policy put them through the same courses and learning pace as their local counterparts did. It was undoubtedly a waste of time for them to study the same thing repetitively. Li Qian (ML) gave an example and elaborated as follows:

> Actually when we first came during the first semester, we had a course called
> 'Understanding Hong Kong'. The course length can be shrunk because what
> was more important at the initial stage was to learn the [local] language. But,
> when we came, we were not given any course to learn the language when we
> began to study together with the local students [who mostly speak Cantonese
> only]. ... (M2/102)

Li Qian (ML) then proposed,

> ...For example, [we should] have more freedom to select which course to take
> since we could have obtained double degree over there [in Tsing Hua
> University]. Here we can only obtain one degree. And, it is compulsory for
> you to finish 100 credit hours by the time you graduate or you won't be able to
> graduate. (M2/102)

Seeking extra opportunities to learn by themselves, some Tsing Hua informants like

Liu Kun (ML) once attempted to sit in some Year 2 courses without proper

informing procedure, yet he was not always welcomed. The findings illustrate that a

strong desire was voiced to have a more flexible and apt course selecting policy for

the Tsing Hua students to study more efficiently and effectively in this particular

context.

The third type of adjustment problem reported regarding the new learning

environment was more an administrative issue than an academic one. Unlike their

Baptist counterparts, the Tsing Hua informants were not the local Hong Kong people

and so the administrative policies applied to the local students may not be

appropriate to them. However, the findings reveal that the University seemed to lack

a counter policy adjustment to cater the special needs or cases happened to these

Mainland students on the campus. As Li Qian (ML) discovered,

> ...For example when facing a case, you don't know whom you can ask since
> nobody knows. None of them seemed to be responsibility for handling it.
> [They] don't have a clear concept of resolving these problems. (M2/98)

He found that "... Since we are actually different from the local students. We had

different backgrounds and have taken different courses. They [the University] did

not have a counter policy to handle these problems. I found this particularly

inappropriate." (M2/100) At the end, he concluded by urging:

> ...Not only the [Mainland students] should adjust to the university, but also the
> university to have corresponding adjustment to these students ... Otherwise,

some of us would become the sacrifice of this scheme. (M2/98)

He believed that 'adjustment' requires a mutual cooperation and collaboration instead of from either side. To the university, the lack of counter policy change may mean nothing, but it can definitely jeopardize a student's academic development, as Li mentioned again. Apparently, the alteration of course arrangement for these sojourners especially during their initial arrival, the elastic course selection policy, and the complementary managerial policy for these particular Mainland students require more and timely concern from the University.

The last practical difficulty in learning in the current context is the availability of teachers for consultation.

> ...What is different between the teachers here (in Hong Kong) and those in
> Mainland is that teachers here usually offer help to their students during their
> working hours. Teachers in Mainland will help their students even during their
> non-working hours since teachers in Hong Kong view the assistance as part of
> their work, while teachers in Mainland see it as part of their work as well as a
> kind of *ren qing* (human feeling). Li Qian (ML) M2/90

Li Qian (ML) also elucidated that it was very common for students to visit their teachers at home and ask them questions, and the teachers usually welcomed that sincerely. This is a primary difference between the teachers in universities in Mainland and those in Hong Kong. Other than this aspect, the informants generally found most of the teachers in the University very friendly, knowledgeable, patient and caring. Naturally, they found that the teachers who were originally from Mainland and spoke Putonghua were especially close to them for they shared the similar culture.

5.1.4 Adjustment to the new living and cultural environment

5.1.4.1 Overall responses

Putting aside the difficulties in adjusting to the different spoken language which will be detailed in Chapter 6.1.4, the different diet and the geographic environment, almost half of the Tsing Hua informants generally found no problem adjusting to the new living environment in Hong Kong. As one of them, Gao Min (ML) who came from a bigger city, pointed out,

> I think to adjust to a better living environment is always easier. [One] would find it harder to adjust to a more difficult environment. For example, if you ask me whether I would fit in the environment in Tsing Hua University, for sure I would say 'No'. ... (M7/98)

Gao Min (ML) then put forward some practical examples like the shared bathroom that she had to use during her one semester's stay in Tsing Hua for some preparatory courses before she reached Hong Kong. Obviously, she had her eyes focusing on the everyday practice when facing the adjustment problems. Likewise, coming from a relatively poorer and difficult living environment in Mainland, most of the Tsing Hua informants tended to adjust to a better and more comfortable living environment in Hong Kong pretty easily. As eight out of the eleven originally came from villages or small town in the remote areas of Mainland with only simple furniture at home and no taxi in town, the comparatively advanced and modern living environment of Hong Kong formed a sharp contrast. Instead of having problems adjusting themselves to the new living environment, some of them found that they adjusted to it too easily so they had difficulty in disciplining themselves to keep their original living and learning habits. For example, both Lin Feng (ML) and Gao Min (ML) found that they began to stay up and got up late as some of their host counterparts. Having said that, many of the Tsing Hua informants were still very surprised and excited during the initial stage of their arrival.

5.1.4.2 First 'shock' and initial feelings

Born and raised in Mainland in their previous upbringing, the Tsing Hua informants found Hong Kong, to them, a completely different world compared to Mainland as Yang Jing (ML) said. They were totally shocked by the relatively clean environment, the advanced and well-developed transportation system, and the rapid growth of everyday information technology in Hong Kong during their early arrival, and then later the polluted air, hasty living pace and dense living environment. As Lin Feng (ML) recalled, "I feel the living here is pretty good, very convenient." (M11/106) Liu Kun (ML) also shared the same thought and claimed, "very good, I found the environment very good. ..." (M9/52) Unexpectedly, Yang Jing (ML) found "Hong Kong having more green ... since Guangzhou (the city she came from) has less green," (M1/72-74) while Tang Ziyong (ML) found "the sky is not as blue as that in China." (M7/116) Focusing on the environment in the University, Wen Jingshan (ML) felt that "the teaching buildings here appear newer than those in Tsing Hua," (M3/99) whereas Liang Ming (ML) commented on the local students and went, "the local students who received us were very nice. They treated us for lunch and gave us some presents. So, I felt especially good." (M3/100)

Compared with many of their Mainland counterparts studying overseas, the Tsing Hua informants in the present study seemed to have experienced less psychological disturbance. Having said that, a few of them expressed their distress of feeling loneliness and homesick. As Yang Jing (ML) revealed, "Yes, [I feel homesick.] ...If I have money, I'll call home; if not, I'll sleep [to get away from it]." M1/98-100 Others like Liu Kun (ML) chose to "read when feeling homesick" M9/66 It appears that they seldom sought emotional comfort from others even when feeling upset, their thrill of being in Hong Kong, and business with their study soon covered up this

disturbance. All the positive initial impressions brought excitement and rosy anticipation to the Tsing Hua informants before they realized the difficulties they had to face mainly including the different diets, the problems of getting around, and the uncertainty of using a different tongue as detailed in Chapter 6.4.1.

5.1.4.3 Different diet, geographic environment and language

Other than language, the very first outcry of difficulties when living in Hong Kong was the different styles of food in Hong Kong. All Li Qian (ML), Su Jin (ML), and Zhou Wen (ML) respectively cried out, "The food here is not good. Actually, we're not very picky. The main [problem] is [that we have] different preference of taste. What they think is the most delicious is not what we think." (M2/138), "... [I] am not used to the food. The food here tastes too light. Over there we eat spicy food," (M8/86) and "the rice (food) is too bad." (M4/72) To Yang Jing (ML), the deficiency of getting around was more a problem. Like she said, "don't know where is where. When others talked about here and there, where they lived, I thought to myself 'where is that?'" (M1/78)

5.1.4.4 Coping strategies to adjust to the new living environment

Facing the different style of food, some of them chose to cook themselves, but most simply lived with it according to what was available on campus since they were not familiar with the places. None of them, however, have changed their diet at this stage to adjust to the different living environment. Whenever they got a chance to go back home during the school vacations, they tried to eat a lot and brought some back to Hong Kong. To know more about the places in Hong Kong, some like Yang Jing (ML) became more active and asked her local counterparts whenever she heard a new place, whereas most others did not bother to find out and often confined

themselves to the campus area.

5.2 Baptist Students' Adjustment to the Different Learning Environment

Obviously, as home students, the Baptist students' adjustment centres on the different learning environment after the presence of their Tsing Hua counterparts. This section will thus examine the findings in four main aspects: the Baptist students' perception of their Tsing Hua counterparts, the Baptist students' perception of the difference of the two groups, their reaction to the different learning condition, and the strategies adopted to cope with the changed learning context.

5.2.1 General perception of the Tsing Hua counterparts

5.2.1.1 On personality and quality

"What is your general impression of the Tsing Hua students?" – a simple question started the fifteen Baptist informants looking back their initial experience with the Tsing Hua students. Having only one or two and at most three Tsing Hua students in each of their class, some of the informants found it a bit hard to simplify how they felt about the Tsing Hua students in general since each of their Tsing Hua classmates left them a different impression. As Henry (HK) detailed,

> Actually, it's rather hard to generalize it. The three [Tsing Hua classmates] are
> very different from each other. I found Zheng Wen Shan (ML) very nice. I
> was pretty close to him, talking to him all the time. We exchanged ideas about
> our assignments. In fact, it was he who gave me the ideas, not any 'exchange'.
> The other girl looked pretty 'cool', while the last one was quite balanced,
> being 'cool' and talkative from time to time. So, it's hard to take a broad view
> of the overall impression. (H8/24)

As each of the Tsing Hua informants represented a different 'self' in the eyes of their Baptist counterparts due to their individual personality, they were described differently regarding their personality and qualities. Their character features

correspondingly include 'outspoken in class but not sociable', 'nice and friendly', 'independent', 'talkative', 'quiet', 'easy-going', and 'sociable'. Other qualities mentioned consist of 'having a strong sense of nationality and responsibility of society', 'highly devoted to their studies', and 'always by himself/herself'. Among which the more common ones are 'independent' and 'friendly'.

5.2.1.2 On study

'Hardworking' and 'self-learning'

One thing that the Baptist informants were more than sure to point out about all their Tsing Hua counterparts studying at the Hong Kong Baptist University is 'industrious', 'very industrious'. They mentioned it so frequently that made one wonder how hardworking the Tsing Hua informants really were.

> Sometimes I came back to school on Saturday and I saw them [two of the
> Tsing Hua students] learning some computer softwares in the Computer
> Laboratory by themselves. Matthew (HK), (H2/8)

He then added that it was not compulsory work, nor did it have a lot to do with their major studies, but the Tsing Hua students took the initiative to learn it by themselves. Amy (HK) exemplified the degree of the Tsing Hua students' industriousness by a Tsing Hua informant who sat in her class throughout the two semesters last year. With her eyes open wide, Amy (HK) said,

> ...He actually made a copy of all the notes and reading materials we had. And
> he would read the articles assigned for class discussion, then discussed
> together with us in the class. (H1/46)

She also could not help acknowledging that "sometimes I feel that he [as an outsider] prepared even better than we [students who were majored in the subject] did." (H1/58) In other words, she was very amazed and surprised to see this Tsing Hua participant being so hardworking on his non-major and, most important, non-credit

bearing studies, and felt quite guilty about their inadequate preparation and devotion to their majored study.

Coherent to the above findings, what have been noted in the first round of class observation also support the high self-learning competence of the Tsing Hua informants. This was particularly noticeable in the Mathematics classes as seen in Observation A. Many of them brought the Mathematics reference books they obtained from Mainland with them to class. In one occasion, the teacher was introducing a new theory "Taylor Expansion". Some students seemed to have known that already, so they checked the reference books they brought from Mainland to find out more about it as they listened to the teacher. When one of them, Gao Min (ML), asked the teacher for further explanation, Lin Feng (ML) did not agree and kept consulting his own books as the inquiry went back and forth, while some other students also turned to their own reference books as they listened to the discussion. Similar independent study was observed in the English lessons in Observation B and Observation D. The only difference was that they brought an electronic dictionary with them instead of their Mathematics books. Whenever they came across new English vocabularies themselves or from their teacher, they instantly turned to their electronic dictionary and found out the meaning, pronunciation and usage. Once when the teacher was talking about 'walkie talkie', Zhou Wen (ML) asked whether that was Hong Kong English or British English. Before the teacher gave them a perfect explanation, some students were on their way to find it out from their electronic dictionary. This was actually not only observed in the classroom learning, the Tsing Hua students displayed the same eagerness and seriousness of learning English even during casual discussion at the lunch time with others (25 March 1999). Evidently, it was sensed that these students would not simply yield to what they were told, they, by all means, would find out what was true.

Serious learning attitude and frequent enquiry

The enthusiasm and serious attitude towards learning and search for the truth can also be clearly demonstrated by the Tsing Hua informants' frequent inquiries during and after class found in the first round of observation. A striking example of this is their doubt about the grammatical points their native English teacher explained to them in their English class in Observation B (30 April 1999). The teacher was checking the answers of a grammar exercise that the students finished in class. When coming across a sentence that went, "Many lives are saved by kidney and liver transplanted from one person to another", the students challenged the native English teacher by suggesting that the passive voice in the above sentence could be in active voice. Whether the students were right or not, they have illustrated their eagerness to learn and to search for alternatives in this case. Another recurrent query in the same English lesson was the questions about the spelling, meaning and pronunciation of some vocabularies. For instance, after listening to a piece of news on the television, Zheng Wenshan (ML) asked the teacher how to spell the name of the province 'Alberta', in another case, what 'tragedy' meant. Though questions like these may sound simple and at times trivial and make them lose face, the typical face-saving Chinese culture seemed to have not become a stumbling block for them to learn.

The constant and consistent enquiry depicted above was not only seen in class, but also after class. For example, Gao Min (ML) in Observation A (28 April 1999) was found especially keen on asking questions. She would not give up even after class. One extreme case occurred during the late afternoon class on "Understanding Hong Kong" in Observation E (5 May 1999) in which each of the students was to give a short oral presentation with the topic they chose. Unexpectedly, many of them chose very challenging topics like "New challenge: the history faced by the people and the

youth", "Confucian teaching", "The development of technology in China: past and future", and "A comparison of Christianity and Mao's theory". And expectedly, those topics have stirred up very heated and intensive discussion and argument among themselves and with the teacher. The end of the two and a half hours' class presentation and discussion did not stop them from further search and justification of their own points, they continued and extended it on the way to the restaurant with the teacher and in the restaurant during their dinner the whole evening. This was how seriously they could query.

'Good academic performance' and 'make every effort to study'

Other than the general incredible industriousness and seriousness about studying, what came onto the list next are respectively 'good academic results' and 'make every effort to study' followed by 'very intelligent'. For the first time in their higher form, the Baptist informants saw some students getting almost full marks in their tests. Stunned, one of the Baptist informants, Katherine (HK) depicted,

> ... I thought there is no way somebody can obtain 80 or 90 something in a test, especially when they reach a higher form... That is to say, 20 something can also be the passing score. Shockingly, what I found [about the Tsing Hua students] is that they can really achieve such a high score at the tertiary level. (H6/82)

No wonder, another one, Amanda (HK) also said, "Very intelligent. It seems that they didn't need to listen to the lecture, yet they understood what was taught. Sometimes, I didn't see them in class, they, however, knew how to do what was taught." (H8/26) Up to this moment, what can also be observed from the findings is that the Baptist informants' acquaintance with their Tsing Hua counterparts is seemingly nothing more than how they studied and socially behaved, appearing superficial and limited.

5.2.2 Perception of the two groups' difference

Interestingly, what happened in the discussion when the Baptist informants were asked to portray their Tsing Hua counterparts was their spontaneous comparison between the two groups. Many of them automatically highlighted the remarkable difference between the Hong Kong students and the Tsing Hua students in general regarding their studying, social life and goal-orientation.

5.2.2.1 On study

Academic results and perception of academic competence

Speaking of study, the very first distinction between students of the two groups that all the Baptist informants brought up is the rather large academic gap. "Absolutely, [the gap of our academic level is] very obvious, indeed," said Frank (HK) very certainly. (H10/19) Another one, Paul (HK), manifested this by the GPA (grade point average) the students attained in his class last semester and said, "... His [one of the Tsing Hua students in the informant's class] GPA was 3.7...the next one was three point six something ...It seems not a big gap." (H9/49) But then he clarified, "Maybe that local student who ranked right behind the Tsing Hua counterpart was pretty good. Others usually maintain no higher than three." (H9/51) To measure it in another scale, the average grades gained by the Tsing Hua students ranged from 'A-' to 'A', while those obtained by the Baptist students 'B-' or below. In a more specific context, the local students appeared especially weak in certain academic areas. For example, "yes, sometimes [I] feel how come they can do it so fast, how come we can't make it. Sometimes, I feel only they can make it and we won't," observed by a Mathematics majored informant, Amanda (HK). (H8/103)

The different intellectual gap between the Tsing Hua students and the Baptist students was not only reflected by their actual GPA difference and class performance, but also by their perception of the Tsing Hua students' capabilities to achieve top levels of academic performance, compared with their abilities to produce rather low level of academic or general performance. Amazed, Patricia (HK) said,

> ... For instance, you seldom hear that we have a friend giving us a poem that he makes as a birthday present. But, many of her [one of the Tsing Hua informants] friends can achieve that. Maybe they have built such a solid foundation since they were little and have always had a good school result. (H10/114)

Similar thoughts can be revealed more clearly from how another Baptist informant with mid-high academic level, Patricia (HK), felt about her. With a GPA of 3.44 the semester before the present interview was conducted, she still claimed,

> ...she [one of the Tsing Hua students] is really the top notch in the whole cohort of our Department. Actually there are some other top students in our Department ...I couldn't catch up with those, let alone with her. (H6/36)

Though the difference between the academic standard of students of the two groups is a hard fact, it is not as significant as the way most Baptist informants perceive what they can achieve academically. As one of the Tsing Hua informants, Li Qian (ML), once stated, "sometimes what one perceives what he can do is more important than what he actually can do." (M2a/12) It was this belief that keeps Li Qian going and meeting new challenges.

Learning attitude

What follows the discussion of this academic weakness is a more critical issue – the completely different learning attitude of the Hong Kong students and that of the Tsing Hua students. As Amy (HK) pointed out,

> the local students voiced their opinions in class in order to obtain the

participation marks allocated for speaking out in class. They were forced to do so. ... But he (one of the Tsing Hua counterparts) did want to express his ideas. Also, it seems that many of the local students were too afraid to speak out, thinking that they will be challenged, while he really had the heart to share. (H1/76-78)

A trace of similar contrast of extrinsic and intrinsic learning motivation between the Hong Kong students and their Tsing Hua counterparts can be seen from findings observed in the second round of class observation. For instance, Tang Ziyong (ML) in Observation 2 (2 November 1999) was the only one who sought to find out the explanation for the sentence that nobody got the correction right at the very end of the lesson. Though the local counterparts appeared to have the same doubt, none of them bothered or dared to ask why. Similar to Tang Ziyong (ML), Yang Jing (ML) in Observation 4 (1 December 1999), Zheng Wenshan (ML) in Observation 3 (3 November 1999), and Su Jin (ML) and Liang Ming (ML) in Observation 6 (7 December 1999), were the only students who raised questions at the end of the lesson when their teachers invited questions from the floor before they dismissed the class. Yang Jing (ML), for example, asked the teacher for further exemplification of two economic concepts, while Zheng Wenshan (ML) asked their teacher for their personal experience about earthquake as they just had a group discussion on the topic. To some extent, these scenarios have revealed the real interest and intrinsic motivation the Tsing Hua students had towards their studies and learning in general.

Tracing back the problem of the learning attitude of some local students, one of the Baptist informants, Frank (HK), generalized:

> ...Some Mainland students, in my impression, can highly concentrate on their studies. They could really immerse themselves into their studies. Some others who don't like studying, however, would stop studying at their primary level. Hong Kong students are different. They have to study at least till F.3 (secondary three). The higher grade they reach, the fewer students there are.

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Ultimately, it turns out that the Mainland people become very aggressive and ambitious, whereas the Hong Kong students could not figure out whether they are forced to study or they themselves really want to study. (H10/112)

It was this entirely diverse learning attitude that led the students of the two groups to different direction, pinpointed by quite a few of the Baptist informants.

Classroom behaviour

Being attentive in class

With the different learning attitude described, many of the Hong Kong students appeared distinctly different in class from their Tsing Hua counterparts. Findings obtained in this area can be viewed in three main aspects, namely their different level of attention to class, their readiness to question and to respond in class, and their reaction and the role they played in academic tasks assigned in class.

To begin with, some of the Baptist informants (Patricia (HK), Matthew (HK), and Samuel (HK)) confessed their laziness contrasting to their Tsing Hua counterparts' consistent industriousness. "They (the Tsing Hua students in class) often sat by themselves and listened to the lectures very attentively, while we (the local Baptist students) would talk and ...," Paul (HK) admitted. (H9/16) Another one, Samuel (HK), put forward,

> ...Anyway, he (Li Qian, his Tsing Hua counterpart) wouldn't fall asleep. Also, he must sit at the first row, being very attentive to the lectures. However, we usually sat a bit close to the back and talked while the teacher was giving a lecture. For sure, he would not utter a word with others in class. He would not talk to you until after class. (H5/20)

Same as what Samuel (HK) disclosed, in the Observation 5 (1 December 1999), Li Qian (ML) was also found very attentive listening to his teacher's explanation and others' opinions at all times during the lesson. Similar to Li Qian (ML), Yang Jing

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(ML) was also found very attentive whenever her teacher or her other classmates presented their ideas in Observation 4 (1 December 1999). In this accounting tutorial lesson, students were asked to work on some exercises at home, come back and choose one of them to present on the board to the other classmates. Students were encouraged to take turns to present and explain their answers by receiving certain marks each time they did so. Yang Jing (ML) did not present her solution on the board this time in class, but she appeared very attentive from the beginning when the teacher gave instruction to the class, throughout each of her four local counterparts' presentation and justification of their ideas, till the end of the lesson when the teacher repeated an explanation of one of the exercises the fourth student did. Throughout the whole process, she jotted down the teacher's explanation and cross-referenced what she heard and what was stated in the textbook. At one point when her group members were chatting with each other as one classmate went out to share his solution, she could not help quieting them down by going 'Sh'. This eagerness to listen in class noted among the Tsing Hua students again formed a rather large contrast with some of their local counterparts who appeared pretty bored in class.

Frequent query and responding in class

Secondly, the different level of interest and concentration in class between the two groups were also reflected by the Tsing Hua informants' more frequent query, immediate and constant responding in class noted in the first round of class observation. Though the kind of fanatical and continuous questioning and responding that the Tsing Hua informants demonstrated when having classes by themselves was found less evident when they had classes with their Baptist counterparts during the second semester, it could still be noticed by the action they took when they or their Baptist counterparts had a question. For example, one of Lin

Feng (ML)'s local group members (in Observation 1, 29 October 1999) wanted to know the definition of a vocabulary item in his reading, but was too timid to ask the teacher. Lin Feng (ML) immediately asked the teacher the question for him without even thinking about it.

In addition, it was quite regular for the Tsing Hua informants to respond to their teachers verbally and non-verbally as soon as their teachers checked their comprehension. The whole class' simultaneous response also showed how responsive they were in academic setting. For example, in the English lessons in Observation B (30 April 1999), the teacher was checking the exercise answers with the Tsing Hua students by asking the whole class to speak the answer they picked. As she went sentence by sentence, the whole class shouted out the answers in full form instead of the number of the answers automatically. Another more visible evidence of this readiness to respond was their repeating what the teacher has said in their English class. During the lesson on 'How to interrupt politely' in Observation D (5 May 1999), the teacher gave out some examples like 'Excuse me', the students repeated after the teacher in no time imitating the tone and the pronunciation of the teacher. Later when the teacher distributed the handout with more examples in it, they again read them out loud by themselves. As the teacher explained and demonstrated each of them one by one, they started the imitation again, which revealed their readiness to learn evidently. Additionally, quite a few Tsing Hua informants tended to show their responsiveness by using their body language. For example, Yang Jing (ML) in Observation 4 (1 December 1999) and Li Qian (ML) in Observation 5 (1 December 1999) would show their understanding by nodding their heads. Some other Tsing Hua students like Lin Feng (ML) in Observation 1 (29 October 1999) and Tang Ziyong (ML) in Observation 2 (2 November 1999)

illustrated their readiness and responses by action like standing up when their teachers asked for volunteers to represent their group members to report what they have worked out. This readiness to learn described above was found relatively less common among the Baptist counterparts.

Action taken to accomplish academic tasks

The last noticeable classroom behaviour difference between members of the two groups was their different approach of handling academic tasks and the role they usually played in those in- class activities. The prompt actions taken by Tang Ziyong (ML) and Zhou Wen (ML) in a sentence correction activity described in Observation 2 (30 April 1999) in Chapter 4.1.4.1 was a typical example of this kind. Having said that, not every Tsing Hua students appeared exactly this devoted to each of the task they were given. Nevertheless, they were generally found restrained, task-oriented and dying to make good use of every chance to learn. Comparatively speaking, their Baptist counterparts were also found obedient, following the teacher's instructions, but not as closely and actively as they did with some appearing not quite interested in the tasks given. For instance, when Tang Ziyong (ML) and Zhou Wen (ML) first moved into a small group with the other two local students, one of the local counterparts in their group suggested they divided the sentences that needed to be corrected into four so that not everyone has to go through all of them. However, Tang Ziyong (ML) and Zhou Wen (ML) did not seem to agree. Instead, they turned to their correction paper immediately and worked on it by themselves, while the teacher rushed some other groups to concentrate on and finish their work efficiently so that they could start putting the answers on the board for evaluation.

5.2.2.2 Social life

Other than the academic aspect, the different kinds of social life that the two groups usually involved is another commonly raised distinction between them. Describing what they did between breaks, Lily (HK) stated,

> Maybe it's because they live in the dormitory. So, during the one or two hours' break between classes, they would usually go back to their dormitory, while we would do assignments together or go have fun at the Recreation Centre. Anyway, we would find something to do together... (H3/8)

Paul (HK), another Baptist informant disclosed his feeling about his Tsing Hua counterparts' unwillingness to join the local group by pointing out,

> I think ...um...it's the background. Maybe their goals are different from mine. Their goal is to do a good job in the examination, so they don't have many social activities. They are not very willing to put so much time to have contact with us. What I found out is that even when they eat [at lunch time], they seldom joined us, they wouldn't take the initiative. Sometimes we have some [off-campus] activities, I remember they joined us once to have barbecue. After that, they haven't joined us any more. [We] simply hardly see them ... (Paul (HK) H9/10)

Similar to Paul (HK), Matthew (HK) also compared the different amount of social activities the two groups took part in and said,

> ...They (the Tsing Hua students) are very hardworking. They don't have other entertainment. They may play some basketball ... But we would hang about, go to video game centres and sing at Karaoka, but they wouldn't. (H2/38-40)

The life circles of the two groups patently are wholly different.

5.2.2.3 Goal-orientation

Behind the different orientation of the learning attitude, classroom behaviour and social life lies a more profound and primary difference between the two groups that regulates their different choices. That is the different goals they set in their study and in their lives, and the way they position themselves in the society. As Patricia (HK)

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noted,

> Actually, I think what we plan to pursue is different. For example, there might be only one or two among the local students who would choose to go for excellent academic results and pursue a Master degree afterwards. The rest, however, would not think so at all. I think most the Tsing Hua students, nevertheless, would accomplish a Master degree. For the majority of the local students, once they enter the university, they anticipate a casual relaxing three years in the university. Making friends, dating, having fun in Karaoka and organising some activities are what they foresee in university life. (H10/110)

Samuel (HK) also found this different aims of attending university among the two groups and pinpointed,

> ...What we aim to achieve through the university schooling is very different, ...I simply want to finish my three years study and go find a job afterwards, while they (the Tsing Hua counterparts) may want to obtain an excellent academic result, and accomplish something great in a certain field afterwards. Our purposes are totally different. (H5/86)

He then furthered his comparison by looking at the long-term goals of the two groups and continued to say, "their (the Tsing Hua students') ideal may be very grand, while I merely want to earn ten thousand something after I graduate. I think I'll be more than happy as long as I can find a job." (H5/88) Others with the financial burden like Patricia (HK) would spend more time doing part-time jobs like tutoring. Manifestly, studying is important to the local students, but not the most important thing as considered by their Tsing Hua counterparts. Therefore, while the Tsing Hua informants emphasized the magnitude of study, and 'study' only at this moment, the local counterparts viewed the training of leadership, interpersonal skills and teamwork as more practical and also important elements to develop their career. It was this different school of thought that presided over the students' route of life.

5.2.3 Reaction to the different learning condition

With the joining of the Tsing Hua students on campus, some changes were observed

in the classroom though the course curriculum, classroom settings, teachers and classmates remained unchanged. The added learning elements included, suggested by the informants, the Tsing Hua students' modeling, the competition caused by their bright academic results, teachers' attention and other students' reaction to this new condition. An examination of how the Baptist informants react to this learning stipulation, how their peers react to their reaction and finally how they receive their peer's reaction become essential to understand the host's adjustment in this study.

5.2.3.1 Reaction to Tsing Hua students – models or enemies

Apparently, all the Baptist informants reacted favourably to their Tsing Hua counterparts. No obvious jealousy or hostility were reported by any of the Baptist informants or sensed by them among their classmates. Only one informant, Katherine (HK) uttered, "a little bit, maybe they (some of her local classmates) were jealous about Yang Jing (ML) for her outstanding academic results." (H6/92) In contrast, all of them found that there was no reason for them to be against somebody just because they were brighter than them. "Very obviously, their academic results are much better than ours. But, you can't say that you will not welcome them just because they are academically brilliant," Lily (HK) reckoned. (H3/30) Instead, some of them regarded them as a role model.

> ...For those classmates who admire them (the Tsing Hua classmates), they will put more effort into their study. For instance, I consider them as small teachers. To a certain extent, they will drive me to study harder, viewing them as a false enemy to learn from them. ... (Samuel (HK) H5/38)

5.2.3.2 Reaction to the academic gap

Having said that most of the Baptist informants welcomed the joining of the Tsing Hua students, the presence of their Tsing Hua counterparts did generate some

pressure on their study. They liked the Tsing Hua students, but did not feel comfortable about what they had to face owning to academic gap they brought out. Practically, some Baptist informants viewed their Tsing Hua counterparts' remarkable academic results as a danger to securing average results from their study, whereas others saw it as a new target for them to pursue. Based on the specific learning context in which they were situated, their responses varied dramatically from Samuel's (HK) 'very grateful about this stimulation of high intellectual input' to more others' 'very frustrated feeling' like Amanda (HK) and her local classmates due to the conflict depicted in Chapter 4.1.3. in which the gap has created major problem in the everyday classroom practice.

5.2.3.3 Reaction to some teachers' shift of attention

To explore what other factors might make a difference to the learning condition of the local students, and hence, their motivation to learn, the question whether the teachers have given more attention to the Tsing Hua students was put forwards in addition to the informants' reaction to the academic gap. Almost all the Baptist informants were convinced that their teachers actually attempted not to give more attention to the Tsing Hua students since the majority of the students were the local Hong Kong students. "No, not really. [The teacher] has class as he usually does, regarding him (the Tsing Hua student] as same as the others," both Patricia (HK) and Frank (HK) expressed. (H10/70-72) Having said that, three other informants observed something different. An obvious case was disclosed by Paul (HK) who noticed,

> Yes...For instance, the professor would introduce them (the Tsing Hua
> students) to us during the first lesson. Sometimes, he (the professor) would
> take the initiative to ask them questions. When we had Instrumental
> Chemistry, the professor, I think, could only remember their names...he would
> only address them by their names. It seems that he has never called me by my

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name. (H10/40-42)

When asked whether this has affected the informant and his classmates, Paul (HK) said, "I don't quite care. But I know some students found it not very good, thinking the teacher only remembered the Tsing Hua students' names. Yet, it didn't create much influence." (H10/45) The influence of the case Paul (HK) mentioned is probably not as influential as the case noted by Katherine (HK) who also shared,

> ...the teachers like her (the Tsing Hua student) a lot ...Yes, I could feel [the inequality that the teachers showed]. If the teacher felt that the Tsing Hua classmate couldn't understand what he taught, he would get very nervous...but, what the Tsing Hua students understood was not what we understood. Actually, maybe many like I could not understand what the teacher said in class. (H6/14-20)

Unspoken, Katherine (HK) appeared a bit upset about the situation. Facing the same scenario, Samuel (HK), conversely, took a more active attitude.

> Yes, [the teacher gave him more attention]...whenever the teacher asked questions, he would ask him first...And when the Doctor found some questions really difficult, he would again ask him whether he understood. (H5/100-104)

To Samuel (HK), this would only make him feel that he knew too little and he was very 'poor'. It, however, did not discourage him, as he continued, "I won't get depressed. Unlike the secondary school's study, you can never learn all the things you need to learn now. So, if I don't know certain things, I think it's very natural." (H5/108) Wrapping up the findings in this aspect, we can find that more attention was given to the Tsing Hua informants than to the local students by some of the teachers. While some local students felt upset about this shift of attention, most found it not as influential and negative since they were aware that most of their teachers did try to take care of the majority first.

5.2.4 Strategies to cope with the changed learning context

As different local students reacted differently to the changed learning conditions, the strategies they each adopted also differed from each other largely. Confronting the differences in class, many Baptist students were reported to have inspired by these changes, but most kept their old ways of studying. Only those who either felt most positively influenced or negatively affected carried out counter action to tackle or fit in the situation directly and overtly. For instance, enthused by his Tsing Hua counterparts' perseverance to study and excellent academic results, Samuel (HK) took the initiative to approach them, hoping to learn more from them, while Katherine (HK) chose to stay away from the Tsing Hua student in her class and keep her own ways of studying. Meeting the arising academic gap between the local students and their Tsing Hua counterparts, some local students were strongly triggered and thus took certain actions. Positively some like one of Gao Min's (ML) local counterparts was prompted to study very hard and consistently keep close to their academic performance, whereas others who felt the threat of endangering their final GPA like another group of Gao Min's (ML) local classmates bluntly discussed this perceived problem and the detailed story will be given in Chapter 6.1.2.

Since most Chinese do not like to bring face to face with problems, they usually talk about it and try to resolve the struggle behind the scene. Affected by both the use of Putonghua between the Tsing Hua counterparts and the subject teachers in their everyday class and the academic gap between students of the two groups, Amanda (HK) felt frustrated and wished the class could be divided into two levels, one for them, the local students, and the other for her Tsing Hua counterparts, while Henry (HK) actually discussed the problem with his other local classmates and tried to sort out the problems as will be detailed in Chapter 6.4.1.2 when analyzing the conflict caused by the use of language in class. In this particular case, not only Henry (HK)

and some of his local classmates, but also the subject teacher adopted some strategies to cope with the new class context. According to Amanda (HK) and Henry (HK), he basically had to suggest the Tsing Hua students not to come to class if they knew that they have learnt what would be taught in class. The more harmful and averting tactic in another case because of the academic competition adopted by some of Katherine's classmates as described in Chapter 4.2.3.when mentioning the unhealthy competition caused by this severe competition.

Contrasting to the cases mentioned above, most Baptist informants and their local counterparts found it understandable for their teachers to pay more attention to their Tsing Hua counterparts. To conclude, the strategies the local students applied to cope with the changes made by their Tsing Hua counterparts did diverge from person to person depending on to what extent the changes have personally influenced them and to what extent they could accept them based on their personalities, their own belief, and their perception of the situation.

Summary
To reiterate, the present chapter has described the adjustment both the Hong Kong group and their Mainland counterparts have gone through under the exchange scheme in terms of the difficulties they faced and the coping strategies they applied to tackle the change. As evidenced in the findings, the foremost cultural adjustment they experienced were the different spoken language, and more striking, the distinct cultural and social values, belief, perceptions, and attitudes embedded in their respective cultural backgrounds, which ultimately hampered their intercultural communication (See detail in Chapter 6.4.1 and 6.4.2). Unexpectedly, comparatively speaking the Baptist students seemed to have faced more adjustment difficulties than their Tsing Hua counterparts. What is more fascinating were the series of perceived

differences between them and their Tsing Hua counterparts they raised during the interviews, which is essential for the discovery of the underlying structures of the difficulties they faced when adjusting to each other, and this directly leads us to unravel the puzzle that lies in the midst of the two groups' intercultural communication in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6 ANALYSIS OF DATA – Intercultural communication, Hindering and Facilitating Factors

Up to this point, we have examined substantial findings in two essential areas. They are respectively concerned with the impact of the scheme to the Tsing Hua informants as well as their Hong Kong counterparts in Chapter 4 and the adjustment experience of both groups to the different learning and cultural context in Chapter 5. Analysis in these two chapters has not only provided us with some primary answers for the first two research questions set in Chapter 1.2, but has also given rise to the series of interwoven factors that impeded and conversely aided the establishment of the intellectual exchange and constructive competition between the two groups. The purpose of the present chapter is thus to identify the cultural and contextual factors that shaped the outcomes mentioned in Chapter 4 and to unravel the reciprocal connection between these factors as a whole. To be specific, it starts with a brief description of the intercultural communication and relationship as viewed by the Tsing Hua informants and their Baptist counterparts, continues with the analysis of the role of their communication and relationship in the development of their academic exchange and healthy competition, and ends by exploring meticulously the series of factors that encumbered the spring up of the intellectual activities among the two groups, as perceived by informants of both groups.

6.1 Intercultural and Intra-cultural Relationship between and within the Two Groups
6.1.1 Harmonious yet aloof relationship

The findings revealed in this section are the most fascinating among other subjects discussed in the interviews since the responses were found contradictory, yet

realistic. All the informants from both the Tsing Hua group and their Hong Kong counterparts felt that they got along very well, finding each other friendly and easy to talk to, but only two of them, one from each group, were able to establish closer relationship with each other. At a glance, the most positive response from the Tsing Hua informants came from Tang Ziyong (ML) and Liu Kun (ML) who respectively claimed, "Pretty good. We got along very well, very harmonious," (M7/16) and "[they] were very fun, helped me a lot. We got along very well," (M9/16) and the most successful case may be Yang Jing (ML)'s experience with her local counterparts:

> Pretty good, some of them were simply ordinary friends who would talk about
> assignments or group work, whereas some became closer friends who would
> go traveling together, go cycling and seeing movies after class. (M1/14)

Most others, nevertheless, were like what Gao Min (ML) claimed "[We got along] pretty well, but I couldn't name many of them." (M10/18) Lin Feng (ML) also shared, "pretty good. ... They would take the initiative to talk to me." (M11/14) However, simultaneously many of them acknowledged their very little contact with their local counterparts. As Su Jin (ML) disclosed, "so so, I can recognize their faces, and remember some names. We may talk a little bit after class, but not much," (M8/20) exactly what Paul (HK) described in Chapter 4.3.1. Other than the small talk in class and occasionally during the lunch, they hardly saw or talked with the local students after class. "[We] seldom talked to each other after class," Wen Jing Shan (ML) acknowledged. (M3/33) As Li Qian (ML) elucidated, "actually [we] mainly got together in class. We did do our assignments in the Library, but we usually worked on our own. ..." (M2/12) Li Qian (ML) further demonstrated this communication block out with his experience of having pair work with a local classmate in class as follows:

> [I] often paired up with a local girl to do some experiments in class. But

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actually I did it all, she would clean the equipment. ...She's often there watching. After I finished, I would ask her to clean the equipment, and she would do so. (M2/16-18)

Paralleled to the above findings, the Hong Kong informants indicated rather limited communication and distant relationship with their Tsing Hua counterparts with two, Katherine (HK) and Amy (HK) having no contact at all with their Tsing Hua counterparts in class. The more common description of their relationship was Amanda's (HK) "so so"(H8/14) and Matthew's "seldom together" (H2/34). Paul (HK) elaborated this kind of 'so, so' relationship by describing their conversation as 'starting with one sentence and ending with two at most ...(H9/8).

More positive response was found among those who played a more active role in class or those who appeared more extrovert like Henry (HK) who said, "I think I would be closer to them than Amanda (HK) (another Baptist informant in the same class) since I am the class representative, and thus have more chance to talk to them." (H8/16) Taking the initiative, Samuel (HK) said, "usually he (the Tsing Hua counterpart) is not very active since he doesn't know how to communicate with you ...So I talked to him ...talked about our daily life ..." (H5/74)

Certainly one may note that the students within the same tutorial group knew each other better, while others who only met in lectures had a more distant relationship. The above findings, however, illustrate that having the students of both groups physically together did not promise much interaction and closer relationship since the classroom contact is rather limited and superficial, nor did it provide the common language for the two groups to develop their friendship, which appears the first important factor for establishing academic exchange and healthy competition. Even with Yang Jing (ML) who was able to establish closer relationship with some of her local counterparts, she once said that it was still pretty hard for her to get into the circle of the local students since she simply could not relate to them as easily as she

could with her friends in Mainland. This is exactly what the majority of the other informants felt about their relationship with the local students. They could hang about with the local students once in a while, but they could hardly build a closer relationship than a simple "hi" and "bye" when they passed by each other on campus.

6.1.2 Hostile attitudes from the Hong Kong counterparts

Though the Tsing Hua informants recognized their constrained and shallow relationship with their local counterparts, none of them received any hostile feelings from their local counterparts personally except for Gao Min (ML) and Li Qian (ML) who indirectly heard about some negative responses to their presence among the local group. As Gao Min (ML) disclosed,

> there was an orientation meeting for the new students at the beginning of the semester in which the following question was frequently asked, 'the academic results of the Tsing Hua students are a lot better than ours. Then, the average of GPA will definitely be raised because of that. Does it mean that there will be a higher possibility for us to get a lower grade or even fail?' ... (M10/56)

This subject was made to public in a meeting, which made Gao Min (ML) feel that there must be someone who did not like the Tsing Hua informants in her class. Nevertheless, none of the informants, including Gao Min (ML) claimed that they sensed a kind of antagonism from their local counterparts. Though Li Qian (ML) "used to feel that his classmates were prejudiced towards him when he first appeared in the class, they gradually became nice to him after they came to know him better. (M2/46) When talking about the "hostile attitudes" the local students might have towards the Tsing Hua informants, one Tsing Hua informant, Lin Feng (ML), made such an interesting comment, "I don't know because I found that the attitude of the local students towards us... How should I put it? They would not show their real personality." (M11/52) Though we cannot over generalize how fragile the

relationship between the Tsing Hua informants and their local counterparts was from this statement, we can deduce the kind of restrained relationship between some of them.

6.1.4 Tsing Hua students' closer relationship with their own peers

A counter picture of the relationship that the Tsing Hua informants established with their local counterparts was how they related to their original Tsing Hua group. Having spent one semester in Beijing together to receive initial introductory training, the Tsing Hua group tied especially close to each other. Like Zheng Wenshan (ML) disclosed, "we were very close to each other." (M5/23) Yang Jing (ML) also agreed and remembered, "we (the Tsing Hua group) sometimes had very long talk till midnight or dawn." (M1/114) This closeness, though diminishing as the group went into their different majors later in their study in Hong Kong, has extended among some in the same major, which put them into their own circle. As Li Feng stated, "we played gameball and browse the computer ... with our original group. Sometimes, we play in the evening like ten o'clock." (M11/114-116) Staying in the hostel on campus, Li Feng (ML) admitted that he was closer to the group staying in the NTT (the hostel) and said,

> ...I'm not very familiar with my classmates since they have their own circle.
> They have more to talk about together. I don't have much to talk to them. Too
> deep or too light, don't know what level shall we up to. (M11/118)

That is why some of them like Liu Kun (ML) pointed out that basically the Tsing Hua informants and their Baptist counterparts were living in two different living circles which brought to them totally different networks, social activities and life styles on the whole.

6.2 Intercultural Relationships and Quantity of Communication

To confirm the plausibility of the analysis on how the intercultural communication

and relationship closely ties to the academic exchange, healthy competition, and other non-academic exchange from the Baptist informants' perspective, we can now look at how their intercultural relationship was associated with their impetus to communicate with their Tsing Hua counterparts for academic purpose. According to the findings, a majority of the Baptist informants acknowledged that the distant relationship between them and their Tsing Hua counterparts has held them back from discussing their studies with their Tsing Hua counterparts. It was very common to hear them saying, "...because we don't know each other very well, [I] really don't feel comfortable asking them to teach me" (Lily (HK),H3/66) Katherine (HK) felt the same way:

> Actually I think she (her Tsing Hua counterpart) can play a leading role in class. That means I can ask her when I have something that I don't understand. But, since I was not familiar with her, I never ask her anything concerning my studies. (H6/32)

Similarly, Frank (HK) also said. "... I always study together with our own group who know each other very well... and won't deliberately go ask the Tsing Hua classmates since we are not close to each other." (H10/63-65) Conversely, another Baptist informant, Henry (HK), who has built a closer relationship with one of his Tsing Hua classmates, experienced many more intellectual discussions together. "...In fact we were pretty close. We often talked to each other and discussed our schoolwork together, though it's more he (his Tsing Hua counterpart) taught me how to do rather than a mutual exchange." (H8/24) Apparently, the closeness of relationship between the two groups determines at least the quantity and opportunity of communication and thus the academic exchange among students of the two groups. The Tsing Hua counterparts, however, found language more a problem than their relationship.

> [Asking me about] studies... no. Because language is still a problem. When I

say what I usually say the most, I can use Cantonese, but when talking about something academic, I don't know how to express, neither do they know how to express. (Li Qian (ML), M2/32)

From what has been shown, we can see that the interpersonal relationship was a blocking stone for most Baptist students not to approach their Tsing Hua counterparts for academic discussion, while language for the Tsing Hua informants.

6.3 Communication Quantity and Improvement of Academic Exchange

What, however, we have to recognize is that the positive enhancement of the mutual learning derived from the close relationship among the students of two groups is true with most students, but not for every of them. For example, even though Patricia (HK) often hangs about on campus with her Tsing Hua counterpart she claimed,

> I don't like to ask her about things related to our schoolwork. I found it very boring if we always talk about study. So, I seldom ask her and discuss our schoolwork even though I know she is very good at it. (H10/59)

Findings in this part support that both positive relationship and communication worked hand in hand. Without a close relationship, the Baptist informants found it uncomfortable to approach their Tsing Hua counterparts about academic work; without substantial communication, students of the two groups were not able to build their intercultural relationship. Moreover, it took both the objective opportunity and the subjective desire of the students to bring the academic exchange into sight.

6.4 Factors that Hindered Ample Communication and Closer Relationship

A comparison of the responses from the two groups shows that the foremost two commonly believed hindrances were the language difference and perceived cultural diversity followed by their different living circles. For the Baptist informants, the

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Tsing Hua counterparts' physical distance on campus and the compatibility of their personality in individual cases which was supported by findings in class observation were the determining factors, while for the Tsing Hua informants, the perception of the Baptist counterparts toward them was the key elements from the Tsing Hua students' point of view.

6.4.1 Language – a barrier or facilitator

6.4.1.1 Language in daily conversation

Language, the essential barrier to start the intercultural communication and build a relationship among most overseas students studying in a foreign country (Chen, 1998; Feng, 1991; Klineberg and Hull IV, 1979; Sun and Chen, 1997), was not first seen as a problem since the informants of both groups used the same written Chinese, but later when they needed to use the spoken language in a more complicated situation, it became problematic. Most Tsing Hua informants claimed that they managed to pick up simple Cantonese without much difficulty after their three months' stay in Hong Kong. And, quite often students of both parties were willing to adjust their language in order to communicate as can be noted by Tang Ziyong (ML):

> No, no [language barrier]. ... Actually, we used all three languages (Cantonese, Putonghua and English). In order to communicate, we tried every way to do so. ...They (the local counterparts) knew a little bit [Putonghua]. At the beginning, they would follow us and spoke in Putonghua. But now, basically we follow them to speak in Cantonese. ... Yeah, some of them used to speak in English with us when they met us. But now it's less often. (M7/20-24)

Interestingly, the different spoken language seemed to be more a problem for some Baptist informants than that for their Tsing Hua counterparts. Although both groups used the same written Chinese, some of them found the different spoken language an obstacle in their communication. Patricia (HK), one of Yang Jing (ML)'s closest

local classmates described this obstacle during the initial stage of a relationship as follows:

> I find Yang Jing (ML) all right since she dressed like us. But, I find her another group of friends not quite ... That is you'll find them especially different, not so ... They could not speak Cantonese very well, some even couldn't speak at all, which made me feel the distance between us. I hardly took the initiative to approach them. Even though I wanted to know about them, I would not ask them directly. Yang Jing (ML) is different from them. We treated her just like a local student since she speaks Cantonese. So, I would take the initiative to go talk to her. (H10/82)

What can also be speculated here is that language was marked, to a certain extent, one of the major labels for the local students to differentiate whether one belonged to their own group or not, and that, as a result, led them to decide whether to start the communication and relationship with the Tsing Hua counterparts. With this symbol of identity, Yang Jing (ML), originally from Guangzhou where Cantonese is widely used, was more easily viewed as 'in-group' than her other Tsing Hua informants.

Since the eleven Tsing Hua students came from very various parts of Mainland China, they each carried quite different accents, which made it harder for the Baptist counterparts. Whether the language is a problem, thus, varies from person to person.

> Tang Ziyong (ML) was pretty good. He would speak some Cantonese and Putonghua. Since our Putonghua was very limited, he would try to use Cantonese. But, when he found that he could not handle the Cantonese, he would turn back to Putonghua. It's not a big problem. Zhou Wen, however, spoke Putonghua very fast, not realizing that we could not understand him at all or simply getting used to speak that fast. Hence, I was pretty afraid to communicate with Zhou Wen because he spoke far too fast. (Lily (HK), H3/56)

"...After all, Li Qian (ML)'s Cantonese is not that accurate, while I speak Putonghua just like him speaking in Cantonese," admitted Samuel (HK). (H5/84) At the same

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time, some of the Tsing Hua informants reflexively revealed their struggle with their language that became a hurdle for them as they began to explicate the problem with their communication in the interviews. Liu Kun (ML) who claimed, "No, no [language] problem, was a typical example of this self-contradictory response. Many people here seem to understand Putonghua," while he then exposed that "[I spoke] English to them a lot. ... They (the local counterparts) sometimes used some 'broken language', there were still problems in our communication sometimes." (M9/54-58) Others like Lin Feng (ML) said directly, "because of the language barrier, sometimes we could not communicate." (M11/54).

In most cases, though the problem caused by the use of language seemed trivial in the informants' daily conversations, it actually stirred some difficulties for the students of the two groups to understand each other and further their conversations. The problem was more clearly revealed in the classroom situation when more complicated discussion and academic terms were applied in their communication.

6.4.1.2 Language in the classroom

Compared with the everyday communication, language was much more problematic in the classroom for students of both groups. For the Baptist informants, the difficulty mainly lay in the spontaneous use of Putonghua in class discussion between the Tsing Hua informants and the subject teachers originally from Mainland, while the Tsing Hua informants found the use of code switching and code-mixing by their Baptist counterparts equally confusing.

First of all, some Tsing Hua informants shifted to Putonghua when it came to the time for opinion sharing or questioning in class, and this often put their Baptist

counterparts into darkness. As Amy (HK) said,

> ... Say after some of our classmates have finished their presentations, Zi Yang (ML) would voice his opinions...feeling. ...But, we couldn't understand what he said. He spoke Putonghua very fast. So, after he finished, we would not give any responses to his views. (H1/48-54)

This problem became more serious in certain faculties as quite a few teachers originally from Mainland were also native-Putonghua speakers as the use of Putonghua in class became a central medium between the teacher and some of the Tsing Hua informants during the question and answer section. Disclosing what happened in one of her classes taught by a Putonghua-speaking teacher originally from Mainland, Amanda (HK) frankly stated:

> Because they (her Tsing Hua counterparts) could argue over one question for a long time, unlike we who stopped after we understood the answer. They kept asking and asking, going back and forth with the teacher. ... The problem is that they turned to Putonghua after a few Cantonese discourses, while we couldn't understand them at all. (H8/65-67)

When asked what other students would do when similar situations took place, Amanda (HK) grumbled, "they (the local classmates) became noisy. They either looked at them [passing the conversations back and forth] or ignored them and started doing their own things." (H8/74) Some local counterparts in the class made an effort to listen to these discussions and attempted to cut in to add their comments, but often in vain. As another Baptist informant in the same class, Henry (HK), elaborated,

> For me... since they didn't start with Putonghua at the very beginning, but Cantonese. Then when they found that they couldn't handle the terms or in-depth discussion in Cantonese, they started using their Putonghua. Actually, I would try to catch their argument and discussion when it was still in Cantonese. What I realized is that if someone in the class who's not Tsing Hua students can cut in and add his/her opinions, they wouldn't have continued with their Putonghua discussion since the one who joined in couldn't

understand Putonghua. But, if there was no local student joining in, as we probably had absolutely no ideas about what they were talking about, they would develop and continue using Putonghua in the whole discussion. (H8/77)

We may also realize the problem of academic gap underlined the language impediment in this particular context. That is why when Henry (HK) was prompted to name the frequency of the local students being able to turn the conservations into Cantonese, he added, "yes, there was, but not very often. Maybe because what they talked about was beyond our level. Like Amanda (HK) said, some of the contents have never been mentioned in our course syllabus." (H8/79) What really accelerated the situation to a level of conflict was the recurrence of similar episode, as revealed by Amanda (HK) who said,

> I found it quite a serious problem. Even though it didn't happen during every single tutorial lesson, it happened almost during every lesson. Anyway, whenever the 'Doctor' handed out some worksheet and asked us to work on it, or asked about questions in the textbooks... (H8/83)

She continued to explain, "the teacher sometimes did repeat what the Tsing Hua students asked to us in Cantonese. But, since they gradually turned to Putonghua as they later got into the conversation, we still didn't understand them." (H8/85)

> At most our 'Doctor' would tell us the outcome of their discussion. Yet, we missed the entire detail of what they have exchanged in the process. Maybe it's because of the time constraint, it's hard to translate their conversation sentence by sentence. (Henry (HK), H8/90)

This phenomenon became so obvious that it aroused the concern of the local students in the class. "Actually, I've talked to some of our classmates about this. I found it destructive to both the local students and the Tsing Hua students," Henry (HK) reckoned. (H8/95) The situation has gone so far that the teacher had to ask the Tsing Hua students to do what he did not usually ask other students to do.

> Yes, [the teacher] in fact asked them (the Tsing Hua students) not to come to class if they have understood what was taught in the class. But, since some of

them are really hardworking, they would come to class even though they were told not to have to. Sometimes, I think that the 'Doctor' did try to take care of us first. He always asked whether anyone has any questions. Having waited for a long time, still nobody got any questions. So, the Tsing Hua students thought if you don't ask, I'll ask then. (Henry (HK), H8/97)

Noted in Observation 5 (1 December 1999), it was true that quite often the teacher actually first invited answers from the floor whenever he asked a question; yet, quite often he failed to get any responses. Thus, in this case, either Li Qian (ML) responded voluntarily or he turned to Li Qian (ML) by calling his name. This was also quite commonly found with other Tsing Hua informants in some other classes.

Though the word 'conflict' was not articulated in the entire interview, the heated divergence was definitely emerging as can be seen by the argument brought up among the local students, and the 'losing heart' attitude of some other local students in class. One may argue that this phenomenon could be attributed more to a problem of academic gap instead of that of language, but we cannot deny that the comprehension of the language has to come first before the local students can realize how much they can apprehend the content.

In fact, the constant back and forth argument described above was displayed in the first round of class observation when the Tsing Hua informants had class with their own group, in Mathematics class, in Observation A. The teacher started by responding to Gao Min (ML)'s challenge about the alternative of solving the Mathematic problem, but Gao Min (ML) asked the teacher again with another choice. After the teacher elaborated, Lin Feng (ML) disagreed and asked for further explanation. As Lin Feng (ML) just settled with his explanation, Gao Min (ML) asked again one of the concepts involved in the solution given by the teacher. Very

often they were not content with the sole solution provided. They always asked for alternatives. As a result, they continued to go back and forth till everyone was satisfied with what have been presented. It was also true with the language class in Observation B. The Tsing Hua informants not only repeated what the teacher said, but also sought other ways of saying the same thing. Having said that, what can be noted is that this group of Tsing Hua students was found particularly keen on resolving problems of Mathematics. Apparently, they did not change much after they started having classes with their local counterparts, keeping their inquiry constant and in-depth. This 'normal' in-class inquiry, however, was considered too aggressive and intensive by most of their local counterparts for two main reasons; they were not at the same academic level as their Tsing Hua counterparts were, and more important, they did not speak the same tongue as the Tsing Hua counterparts did. Consequently, they were not able to join the discussion but to wonder what to do about such a situation.

Turning the story to the Tsing Hua informants' perspective, it was found that the academic terms and discourse was a key dilemma for them. As Zhou Wen (ML) put it, "the language use in the classroom and studying was a problem. [I] could understand Cantonese, but English was a hitch …" (M4/52) The language for specific terminology of different study fields used in class often worsened the situation.

> Cantonese I could almost understand all. The major problem is that sometimes they (the local students) would say some terminologies, which are neither Cantonese nor English, and then I can't understand. Since they sometimes would speak in Cantonese, and sometimes English like those terminologies. I think English only is better. (Li Qian (ML), M2/144)

The complexity with this code mixing and code-switching of language use among the local Hong Kong people was considered a major difficulty in understanding the

'Hong Kong Cantonese' by quite a few Tsing Hua informants. For some others, the different spoken language also deterred them from speaking out in class. Gao Min (ML), who was most active asking and responding to questions in the first round of observation when she had class with her Tsing Hua counterparts in Putonghua was a typical case. As she pointed out, "sometimes because I could not speak fluent Cantonese, I had to ask one of the closer classmates in my class to ask questions for me. I told her my questions and then she asked for me." (M10/28) Looking at this account from a different angle, we can also see how the language barrier has become a facilitator to build up the communication and relationship in this particular case, unfortunately limited to only one of the many counterparts.

6.4.1.3 Language as a facilitator

After the return of Hong Kong to China, the number of Hong Kong people learning Putonghua has soared dramatically for various reasons. So, can the language difference in this study be a constructive tool instead of a destructive one in building up the relationship between students of the two groups? The answer is theoretically 'yes', but practically 'not really'. When asked whether the Baptist informants have made good use of the opportunity to learn and practice their Putonghua with their Tsing Hua counterparts, only one of the fifteen informants, Lily (HK), gave a positive response mainly due to their very limited interaction. Another one, Samuel (HK), did take the initiative to use the language as a bridge to stir up the conversation with his Tsing Hua classmate but was not very successful as he found that,

> Li Qian (ML) did not appear very active. After all, he's not living here [in Hong Kong]; he somehow didn't know how to communicate with you. When we (the local students) talked about the local affairs, it may be hard for him to cut in since those news have nothing to do with him... (H5/74)

That brings out the second equally or even more decisive factor that has impeded the

communication among the students: their distinct social and cultural background.

6.4.2 Social and cultural diversity

When talking about the communication between the Baptist informants and their Tsing Hua counterparts, many of the Baptist informants eventually recognized that language was a problem, but not the most important one. What really hindered their communication was their social and cultural diversity, which brought them with different worldviews, values and life goals, and thus different preferences of topics for conversations.

6.4.2.1 Lack of common theme in conversation

Coming from two totally different parts of China did not only give two different languages to all the informants, but also two different cultures which govern the way they spoke, the genre they used and the subjects they mentioned in their communication. As Amanda (HK) said, "sometimes when we met each other, we didn't know what to say." (H8/130) Paul (HK) also shared a similar thought by describing their conversation very trivial (See Chapter 4.3.1).

Later Amanda (HK) also compared the Tsing Hua students' acquaintance with them and that with the international students by saying,

> Last semester there was an international girl in our class. Those Tsing Hua students seemed more familiar to them than to us. Obviously, they had something to say when they bumped into each other. But, with us, they simply gave a glance. (H8/128)

From this we can see what lacked in the communication between students of the two groups was not actually the spoken language, but the common language – the common theme for their conversations.

Simultaneously, similar responses were given by the Tsing Hua informants. Doubtfully, Yang Jing (ML) said, "...Maybe it's really the different family and cultural backgrounds, sometimes I do find it hard to associate with the Hong Kong born and raised Chinese in our communication. That is to say that maybe I'm not interested in what they say." (M1/112) Another Tsing Hua informant, Li Qian (ML), also emphasized,

> ...the cultural aspect. It's hard to have an in-depth conversation with the local students partly because most of them neither have that kind of cultural background, nor the history background. What they know is not what we know, while what we know is not what they know. So, we end up saying something very trivial and get bored as we come to realize the same pattern of communication. (M2/132)

6.4.2.2 Lack of common academic interests in conversation

What was also put forward by Li Qian (ML) was the different mindset of the science students or the local students in general compared with that of the Tsing Hua students.

> ...Another problem between us is that although we (the Tsing Hua students) are science students, we know something about arts, history and philosophy. Say like we would read by ourselves...But they (the local counterparts) appear quite innocent in these aspects. (M2/12)

Li Qian (ML) then illustrated this by saying, "... to put it straight, if you talk about things like history, they don't know much, nor do they show any interests or opinions. I think this is a foremost difference." (M2/12) To phrase it in another way, although all of the informants of the both groups except for one and her classmates were science majored students, they held very different views of the importance of art for science people. For most of the informants from Tsing Hua University, literature, history and art play an essential role in shaping their

personality, directing their decisions and molding the way they see the world for their science orientation that they need the art side to balance and monitor what they do with what they learn. This is, however, not usually how the local students think. Surrounded by the commercial and financial centers in Hong Kong and educated under an exam-oriented system, very few of them can see the value of arts in their world. In the same way, the Tsing Hua informants could not respond to the local students when they talked about the local affairs, movie stars, singers, clothing and shopping in Hong Kong. Gradually, the students of two groups came to know that they do not have a common language, which enables them to strengthen their communication and further their relationship. That is the vital difference between the Tsing Hua informants and their local counterparts, and what really matters when delving into the intercultural communication and relationship between the two groups.

Carrying the same view, Amanda (HK), Henry (HK) and Paul (HK) all three believed that "in fact the biggest problem is the different cultures. The different background of the two groups actually made Paul (HK) feel that the Tsing Hua student in his class were totally detached from them (the local Baptist counterparts) by saying,

> At the very beginning it was more the language problem, but it's getting better gradually. ... Now, [our] different background and upbringing [is more a barrier]. When we talked to each other, I found it quite difficult to communicate with him. Our communication simply sounded incompatible. (H/9/4)

6.4.2.3 Lack of common goals

Other than the general cultural difference, what resided behind the different preference of topic for conversation in this particular case is the informants' different

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pursuit of life goals stemmed from their different values.

> Our different mindset can very largely affect the effectiveness of our communication. For example, what we aim to achieve through the university schooling is very different, which became a barrier in our communication. For me, I simply want to finish my three years study and go find a job afterwards, while they (the Tsing Hua counterparts) may want to obtain an excellent academic result, and accomplish something great in a certain field afterwards. Our purposes are totally different. (Samuel (HK), H5/86)

Samuel (HK) did spell out the long-term plan of most of his Tsing Hua counterparts. As one Tsing Hua informants, Tang Ziyong (ML) also confirmed this thought about their plan of further study in a follow-up conversation made after the Hong Kong government announced the possibility of allowing the Mainland students to stay and work upon graduation,

> No, hardly any [influence to the way we associate people here]. I should say totally 'no influence'. As I said earlier, most of us have not thought about staying in Hong Kong. Hong Kong is just a springboard for us to learn and to reach somewhere else. (M7a/18)

With a vision of their future in other foreign countries, all they had in their mind was to learn as much as possible at this moment, which was different from most of the local students,' especially those in science major students who actually found little interest in science but wanted to secure a job with their degree. This has been detailed in Chapter 5.2.2.3 when the Baptist informants raised their different goal orientations.

6.4.3 Physical distance caused by different values and goals

What closely related to the mental distance between the two groups mentioned above was their physical and social distance. Though the Tsing Hua informants did not explicitly articulate their physical distance or at times absence, this was overwhelmingly discussed by the Baptist informants and well supported by the

participant and class observation, revealing the Tsing Hua informants' different seating in class, different directions to head to after class, and their absence from extra-curricular activities.

6.4.3.1 Classroom seating

The findings show a very clear picture of the seating division of both groups, with the Tsing Hua informants at the very front by themselves and their Baptist counterparts at the back or very back. According to the Baptist informants, "...they (the Tsing Hua students) usually sit in the front" (Matthew (HK) H2/59). Amy (HK) also noted, "Um... he (the Tsing Hua counterpart) usually sits at the first row ..." (H1/120) Similar responses were given by Paul (HK) in Chapter 5.2.2.1. Although the Tsing Hua informants were also aware of their tendency of sitting closer to the front, they did not realize its significance of generating a social distance between them and their local counterparts. As Katherine (HK) explained why she did not have any contact with her Tsing Hua counterpart, "...I won't sit so front." (H6/68) Some Tsing Hua informants also acknowledged this seating habit. As Liu Kun (ML) said, "... usually sat at the very front by myself." (M9/16) He did so mainly because he could listen to the lectures more clearly. Mockingly, he added, "yes, [sometimes my local counterparts would ask me to sit next to them.] In that case, I wouldn't be able to listen to the lecture." (M9/18) Wen Jingshan (ML) also affirmed, "we (another Tsing Hua classmate and he) almost always sat by ourselves." (M3/35) Along the same line, Liang Ming (ML) clarified,

> We all get used to where to sit in class. But I found that they (the Baptist counterparts) could not listen to the lecture very well when they sat together. They always liked to sit at the very back [of the classroom], while I like to sit at the very front. This is why I dared not to sit with them. (M3/37)

It is also understandable that those who had classmates from the same Tsing Hua

group were closer to each other and thus liked to sit next to each other.

> Comparatively, [I] seldom [sat close to the local classmates]. Since Zhou Wen (ML) (another Tsing Hua classmate) and I are in the same Department, we usually sat by ourselves. If I entered the classroom first, I would occupy the seat next to me for him and vice versa. (Tang Ziyoong (ML, M7/108)

The different seating behaviour just mentioned was also noticed in the class observation from which it was found that nine out of the eleven Tsing Hua informants made their way to the first or the second row (if there was nobody sitting at the first row) once they stepped into the classroom, while most of their local counterparts tended to sit closer to the back of the classroom. And, quite regularly they sat by themselves with no other local classmates sitting next to them. Take Li Qian (ML) in Observation 5 as an example. On one occasion, he was the fourth student stepping into the classroom. A few of his local counterparts were late for class. Yet, none of them chose to sit next to him. Only Yang Jing (ML) in Observation 4 and Lin Feng (ML) Observation 1 mingled with his classmates taking the seats close to the front, for one thing, Yang Jing (ML) and Lin Feng (ML) were the only Tsing Hua student in their classes, for another, they appeared more sociable and easy-going. What has just been examined also tells why except for a couple Tsing Hua informants who were the only Tsing Hua students in their majored studies; we could hardly see other Tsing Hua informants 'mix' with their local counterparts. The students from both groups were apparently in one class sitting together, but there was invisible territory among them.

6.4.3.2 Where to go after class

Another physical distance emerged when the Tsing Hua informants mentioned where they usually rushed to after class. Library, dormitory and, for some of them, the office in their Faculties were their favourite. Those places were obviously not

usually where most local students went, as has been mentioned in Chapter 5.2.2.2 when talking about the different social life of the two groups. Even though they met each other in the Library occasionally, very often they would work on their studies by themselves, as described by Li Qian (ML) in Chapter 6.1.1. They hardly had extended conversations after class. This physical distance and absence of the Tsing Hua informants were strongly felt by some Baptist counterparts like Amanda (HK) who cried out, "They just disappeared." (H8/110) She simply had no ideas where her Tsing Hua classmates headed for after class. "They (the Tsing Hua students) left very quickly after class. They disappeared right after class. We seldom saw them on campus... we don't know where to find them." (H8/110 & 116) Regarding the same issue, Henry (HK) elucidated,

> One thing which is very different from the secondary school is that we don't
> have a definite classroom to hang about. Unlike the secondary school where
> we can gather together in the classroom, in the university, we don't know
> where to hang about after class... That's why we almost had no
> communication at all after class. (H8/117)

As a result, the limited classroom conversations and few lunch interactions became the very few, if not the only communication the two groups had in their everyday university life.

6.4.3.3 Invisible territory in social functions

The last physical distance was observed during some social functions in which both the informants and the local students participated. This was accidentally found out in a participant observation in an Easter party organized by an American couple who taught in the University. (2 April 1999) It happened that the hosts invited some of their local students and the informants by another guest. Throughout the whole evening, most of the two groups stuck to their own groups until the hosts

intentionally asked them to mix together. Again, the invisible territory between the informants and the local students can be seen here. Later on another occasion, one of the informants, Li Qian (ML) commented, "sometimes, I think I'm more active meeting friends than the local students. It seems that the local students tend to remain in their own circle." (M2a/4) Li Qian (ML) thought that this has to do with the short geographic distance between the people and communication technology in Hong Kong.

> ...Hong Kong is small and it's easy to reach almost everywhere. It's also convenient to keep in touch with people. So, they tend to keep a close relationship with their own group. ... It is more so for the local students who grow up and receive their schooling in the same school throughout. That is why they tend to stick together. (Li Qian M2a/6-8)

Contrary to this pattern of upbringing, most of the informants attended different schools during the different period of their schoolings as they became more competitive. All of the eight informants originally from remote villages in Mainland had their primary, junior high and high schools respectively in their hometown, a bigger town and big city far away from where their families lived. That is why some of them were more used to reach out for friends.

6.4.4 Cultural rules and social norms

Bearing different values in their culture, some Tsing Hua informants were also found to fall short of cultural sensitivity in their social interaction and communication. They failed to do what the Romans do when they are in Rome, and therefore were not able to either maintain a successful intercultural communication or establish a close relationship with their Baptist counterparts. A typical case of this is the unpleasant experience Amy (HK) described when encountering Tang Ziyong (ML) for the first time. As Amy (HK) recalled,

That evening we had a party at the lower rise building on the new campus. Since things were not ready yet, we (some classmates and I) started chatting with each other. When we went excited and laughing so happily, Tang Ziyong (ML) suddenly rushed in and quieted us down, almost yelling at us not to be so noisy as there was a class going on next door. He looked so serious and furious to us even though we didn't know him back then ... he sounded so fierce that we all got pretty scared. (H1/196)

Shocked, both Amy (HK) and her classmates were speechless and felt,

Yes, I was speechless, didn't know who he was, feeling that he didn't know me, how come he's scolding me. If we knew each other and he scolded, I would leave it, but ...No other [local] students have ever done this to us before ... never. (H1/268-288)

"[Since] the first impression was not good already. ... Later when we got to meet him in the class, he didn't wear much facial expression, nor did he talk to us. So, we haven't even thought about being friends with him since then." (H1/202) Though this is the only unpleasant experience reported by the Baptist informants when encountering their Tsing Hua counterparts, it reveals that the different expectations of social behaviour have hindered them from understanding each other, and consequently stopped them from initiating a relationship.

Similar social communicative barriers were also noted in classroom learning when the Tsing Hua informants started their lengthy querying and opinion sharing, which appeared 'different' to their local counterparts. As Amy (HK) depicted how Tang Ziyong (ML) behaved in class,

...[He] is pretty out-spoken, won't just sit there and listen. He has his own opinions, pretty bold. He won't be afraid that he's not in this class (but simply sit in). Once he has his own opinion, he will speak out, often giving long speech too. (H1/22)

Amy (HK) may sound a bit oversensitive to Tang's act if she did not go on to explain

that the in-class opinion sharing was marked as part of their final assessment. And, Tang's enthusiasm has caused the class to 'compete' for the chance to speak (H1/114).

Such initiative to express and boldness to involve, as Tang's (ML), was found very common in class across most subjects as seen in the first round of class observation. For example, during the Mathematics lesson in Observation A (28 April 1999), students were asked to solve some Mathematics problems that the teacher set on the board. Very quickly two of the Tsing Hua students, Lin Feng (ML) and Liu Kun (ML) raised their hands and made their way to the board. After the teacher corrected one of those who finished first, some students on the floor started negotiating with the teacher right away, trying to see whether there were other alternatives to this solution. Before long, Gao Min (ML) went out to work on her correction by doing the way she found more appropriate. At the end, Liu Kun (ML) was negotiating and discussing a better solution to the Mathematics problem by working together with the teacher on the board, while Gao Min (ML) who has finished her solution later again explained and discussed her solution with the teacher on the board. What was uncommonly found in this scenario is that the Tsing Hua students challenged not only their peers for their work, but also their teacher's work and confronted each other with no hesitation, and they were very open to others' challenge and willing to be corrected. No wonder one of the Tsing Hua informants' teachers in Observation B (30 April, 1999) commented, "The problem with this group of students is how to stop them from speaking instead of arousing them to speak."

What triggered the analysis of this aspect is the fascinating association between what was observed above and what was told by Amy (HK) earlier in this section about her

Tsing Hua counterparts. Since the frequent sharing and candid challenge in class were considered perfectly 'normal' when the Tsing Hua informants had classes with their own group, they naturally did not see its peculiarity in the eyes of their local counterparts when having class together. Such unawareness of some Tsing Hua students of the different and subtle social rules was also further confirmed in findings in one of the class observation when the Tsing Hua informants had classes with their Hong Kong counterparts. What happened between Li Feng (ML) and his local group mates in Observation 1 (29 October 1999) as described in Chapter 4.1.4.2 can best illustrate this point in which Li Feng's (ML) dominance of the discussion has largely annoyed some of his group members. Being a guest in another land, Li Feng (ML) obviously forgot to be more polite, reserved or less aggressive with the strangers.

Since the main venue that the Baptist informants and their Tsing Hua counterparts gathered was the classroom, the Tsing Hua informants' classroom behaviour becomes an important indicator to show the Baptist informants who they are, what they will and will not do. Both the enthusiasm about asking questions and sharing in class of some of the Tsing Hua informants reported respectively by Amy (HK) above, Amanda (HK) and Henry (HK) in Chapter 6.4.1.2 have impressed their Baptist counterparts on the one hand, yet distanced them from getting close to them on the other hand since they were found very different from the other local students.

6.4.5 Situational Difference and Peer Influence

What was also commonly raised by the Baptist informants and noted by some Tsing Hua informants were that practically the two groups were living in two different circles with various learning conditions. The Tsing Hua informants were all staying in the hostel close to the campus while most of their local counterparts lived with

their family away from campus as stated in Chapter 5.2.2.2. This practically separated the students of the two groups in two different circles, which decreased the opportunity for them to communicate with each other. Even the lunchtime did not seem to create any opportunity for students of the two groups to be together. "They (the two Tsing Hua counterparts in class) usually eat together, ... not usually with the local students... because they live in the hostel," noted by Matthew (HK) as well. (H2/59)

Some Tsing Hua informants also acknowledged what has been mentioned. "...Actually we seldom have activities with them (the Baptist counterparts)," Su Jin (ML) conceded (M8/36). Liu Kun (ML), put it more directly by saying,

> ...We (the Tsing Hua and the local students) basically cannot mix our living circles together. Most of us work on our own things. Chinese people have always been like that. So, ... (M9/46)

Meanwhile, the few opportunity with the Tsing Hua counterparts contrasting to the copious time spent with the local counterparts also drove the Hong Kong informants to be more likely to be influenced by their local peers. As Patricia (HK) who was encouraged by her Tsing Hua counterpart at first but gave up later said,

> ...Later because the gap of our academic performance was too large, I gradually gave up. Also, my friends said to me that since you are in the university already, why do you want to study so hard? I kind of agreed with them as life is short, we probably should spend more time to enjoy the world. (H10/39)

The influx of the motivation to learn from the Tsing Hua students in this episode has definitely made a good start to change their Baptist counterparts, but what cannot be neglected is the negative voice of not to learn coming from the Baptist informants' local peers, who easily pulled the more encouraged ones back to their old shapes.

6.4.6 Individual difference – the compatibility of mutual personality

The different upbringing, cultural input and family backgrounds did shape the personality, the value and the view of the informants to a large extent. While some of the Tsing Hua students learn to socialize with others with their experience in the boarding schools, some learn to protect themselves and do their own things. What cannot be neglected, therefore, is the role of each individual's difference in communication, as frequently mentioned by the local informants. A majority of the Baptist informants pointed out that their relationship with the Tsing Hua counterparts highly depended on each individual's personality and behaviour. In a class with three Tsing Hua students in it, the local informants, Amanda (HK) and Henry (HK) found that they each had a very different character. As they described how they felt about their Tsing Hua counterparts in Chapter 5.2.1, Zheng Wen Shan (ML), was found always eager and open to talk and get to know his local counterparts, regardless to the subject of the conversations. The other one, Liu Kun (ML), was a bit slow to respond, always appeared shy and afraid of communicating with his Baptist counterparts, but was willing to work in group tasks. The last one, Gao Min (ML), described as 'cool' by Henry (HK), was not willing to talk, not to say to let others know about her. Obviously, Amanda (HK) and Henry (HK) were able to establish more and better communication with Zheng Wen Shan (ML) instead of the other two in their class. The three informants portrayed in the above case formed a typical example that illustrates how the individual different personality of the Tsing Hua informants has influenced the development of the intercultural relationship between the two groups. Similar cases were reported by some other local informants when they were asked how they got along with their Tsing Hua classmates.

Looking into the same issue in findings from class observation, a contrast of the local students' reaction to the two different groups' discussion led by their different Tsing Hua counterparts spotted in two class observations can highlight this point more clearly. In two group discussions respectively led by Li Feng (ML) in Observation 1 and Zheng Wenshan (ML) in Observation 3 (3 November 1999) as detailed in Chapter 4.1.4.2, both Lin Feng (ML) and Zheng Wenshan (ML) spoke pretty loud, appeared more active and authoritative to their local group members. They, however, differed from each other in terms of their tone and attitude. Zheng Wenshan (ML) sounded more pleasant and willing to accept what his local counterparts expressed, while Lin Feng (ML) simply refused to negotiate, not to say compromise. This different attitude has directly or indirectly brought the exchange of intellectual ideas to a different ending.

Likewise, the other side of the story is the personality of the Baptist informants which has also to be taken into account in order to create any communication between the two groups. For instance, both Amy (HK) and Lily (HK) had Tang Ziyong (ML) as their classmate in different classes. They, however, found Tang Ziyong (ML) a totally different person. Lily (HK) found Tang Ziyong (ML) "pretty active and talkative," (H3/10) and she thus took the initiative to sit close to him and start their communication, whereas Amy (HK) found Tang Ziyong (ML) "cool" and "fierce" (H1/158) and therefore never tried to get to know him. One may argue that if Tang Ziyong (ML) had not been that 'fierce' and odd with Amy (HK) and her classmates in the first place as depicted in Chapter 6.4.4, Amy (HK) would not have left such a terrible impression on him and therefore would have tried to know him, as Amy (HK) claimed. Nonetheless, in the same way, we can argue that if Amy (HK) has been more open to understand, accept what Tang Ziyong (ML) has done to them,

and acknowledge what they have done wrong, she would have well become friends with Tang Ziyong (ML) after their first encounter. Equally, it is fair to say that they may also well be friends if Tang Ziyong (ML) could be more sociable. However, "... he didn't greet us even though he recognized us," as Amy (HK) complaint. (H1/62) After all, it takes members of the both groups start their communication. If either of them holds back, they will ruin the opportunity to develop their communication.

A slightly different yet similar case occurred to another two Baptist informants, Katherine (HK) and Patricia (HK). In this case, they both found the only Tsing Hua classmate, Yang Jing (ML), "very nice, easy-going and humble despite of her bright academic result," as Katherine (HK) put. (6/90) However, it turns out that Patricia (HK) became one of the four local classmates closest to Yang Jing (ML), while Katherine (HK) has never talked to Yang Jing (ML) at all by reasoning,

> I thought that Yang Jing (ML) might have to spend a lot of time on her studies. Also, she joined many extra-curricular activities such as ICER ... In class, she always sits in the first row, while I never sit that far forward. So, I could hardly have a chance to get to know Yang Jing (ML). (H6/66)

It seems a logical explanation, yet, it can be argued that with such a sociable person like Yang Jing (ML), Katherine (HK) would have known her pretty easily only if Katherine (HK) could initiate the first step.

All three cases depicted above show that in a way the individual's personality did carry a certain weight especially when talking about the initiating of an intercultural relationship. Therefore, a different combination of personality of the two individuals respectively from the two groups can directly determine whether the relationship will be established successfully or not in each individual case.

6.4.7 Baptist informants' perception of their Tsing Hua counterparts

A rather indirect yet more intriguing way of examining what has blocked the intercultural communication and relationship of the two groups is probably not how they actually related to each other, but how they perceived each other, which was largely revealed by the Baptist informants unconsciously. Analysis of this part can be classified into the Baptist informants' views of their Tsing Hua counterparts as Mainlanders in general, and as the selected Tsing Hua intellectual group.

6.6.5.1 Tsing Hua students as Mainlanders – "we" and "they" social identities

The most common term used by the Baptist informants when referring to their Tsing Hua counterparts was *keui dei* versus *ngo dei* ("they" and "we" in Cantonese), which was linguistically understandable. A similar yet less friendly version was *an dei* ('others' in Cantonese) found in Matthew's (HK) description. Using 'others' to label his Tsing Hua counterparts, Matthew (HK) went,

> There seems to be some pressure [when having class with the Tsing Hua counterparts]. That means [we] won't be so noisy. Don't affect the 'others' to have class. Even though you yourselves (the local students) don't want to listen to the lecture, you don't want to be so noisy since it will affect the 'others' having class. (H2/42)

Discussing the same issue, Matthew (HK) later acknowledged if there were international students in the class, the local students would not be so noisy. "That is to say, when there are outsiders, the local students will become quieter," admitted by Matthew (HK). (H2/53) The Tsing Hua students in the present study were apparently considered as *oi an* ('outsider' in Cantonese) and *dai yi dao di an* ('people from another place' in Cantonese) like the international students who were different from the local students. This was explicitly stated by Amy (HK) who had Tang Ziyong (ML) sat in her class throughout the semesters. "[If Tang Ziyong (ML) was

Chinese major], I would feel closer, but now it feels like there is an outsider coming in." (H1/304) When prompted to ask whether the 'non-major' or 'non-Hong Kong' students mattered to Amy (HK) in this case, she clarified,

> Like back then we also had some non-Chinese major students sat in our class. Maybe because they were Hong Kong students, I didn't feel so strange or distant. To tell the truth, the bottom line is that he (Tang Ziyong) is a person from another place, hard to communicate. (H1/316)

Looking back, Amy (HK) said, "there are some girls from another department in our Putonghua class now, we get along pretty well, greeting and talking to each other during the break." (H1/320) When challenged that Hong Kong is part of China now, why she still regarded Tang Ziyong (ML) as stranger or one from a different place, Amy (HK) acknowledged, "no matter what, it has been so many years that Hong Kong has been away from Mainland, it's very hard to be so close like a family once it was returned." (H1/328) Coincidently, this sense of 'outsider' was also perceived by Yang Jing (ML) who realized,

> When they did not know you are not the local people, everything is normal. But once they found out that you're from Mainland, they became very surprised and excited. It's good and bad because they would ask you all kinds of questions like where you're from, and what you're doing in Hong Kong, yet the feeling of closeness between Hong Kong people and Hong Kong people would vanish immediately. (M1a/8-10)

Tang Ziyong (ML) put it more directly in English as feeling that they were portrayed as "aliens". From this we can infer how the sojourners' perception on their image in the host's community has stopped them from drawing closer to each other.

6.6.5.2 Tsing Hua students as elites

Strongly related to the perception of the "outsider" is the interpretation of these Mainlanders as elites, not the ordinary class. Their coming to Hong Kong, to a certain extent signified "fighting for the rice bowls," a Cantonese way of saying

people competing to grab the jobs from others. "Yes, a little bit. Like those professionals the Government imported to Hong Kong, we have a feeling that these students will 'grab our rice bowls'," as Lily (HK) uttered. (H3/178) Similarly, Li Qian (ML), expressed,

> ...Sometimes they (the local counterparts) would joke that people up there (from Mainland) came to grab their jobs. ... I don't know whether they were joking or not, maybe half half. ... Actually, they don't care whether [you're really here to work or study]. As long as you are physically here, they thought that you came to compete with them. Especially those from Mainland China... Yeah, they don't care whether you would stay here or not, or even whether you like to stay here or not. (M2/76-80)

A more neutral perception yet one, which still detaches the Baptist informants from their Tsing Hua counterparts is the hardworking image of the Tsing Hua students as described by Katherine (HK) in Section 6.4.6. Saying that she did not approach her Tsing Hua counterpart since she did not want to disturb her busy study schedule, she has drawn a line between the two different intellectual groups and this has equally held her back from getting to know the Tsing Hua students.

6.5 Factors that Facilitated Richer Communication and Closer Relationship

Until now, we have seen many stumbling blocks between the communication and relationship between the Tsing Hua informants and their Hong Kong counterparts. The findings, however, suggest three particular factors that helped to bridge the social gap between the two intercultural groups and this will bring us to answer the second part of the third research question relating to the factors that facilitated the blossoming of the two groups' communication and relationship. They are the 'shared culture' of the two groups, the Hong Kong informants' knowledge and personal experience in Mainland, and the search and need for help from the Tsing

Hua counterparts.

6.5.1 Shared culture between members of two groups

As mentioned in Chapter 6.1.1, among the eleven Tsing Hua informants, Yang Jing

(ML) was found the only Tsing Hua informant who managed to build a solid

friendship with three to four of her local counterparts. A long discussion with Yang

Jing (ML) uncovered the significance of 'shared culture' in her cross-cultural

relationship. As Yang Jing (ML) admitted, "those who are closest to me are not the

indigenous Hong Kong people. [They are] not most local, but can be called 'local'."

(M1/104) They were originally from Mainland. To be exact, they are not considered

the local Hong Kong people. When prompted how Yang Jing (ML) knew about their

backgrounds, Yang Jing (ML) said, "they told me about this the first day we met."

(M1/106) Challenged whether they would become this close if Yang Jing (ML) did

not learn about their backgrounds, Yang Jing (ML) felt,

> [We] would be as close even I didn't know where they were originally from. I
> think it's more their personality that makes a difference. ...Whether their
> family background has made an impact on their personality is another story.
> (M1/112)

However, unconsciously, they appeared to share the similar thoughts, ways to relate

to each other, and most important, and the social identity. Yang Jing (ML) somehow

found it easier to associate with this indigenous Mainland group than with her

original local Hong Kong counterparts.

6.5.2 Hong Kong students' relation network and personal experience in Mainland

If the shared culture mentioned above can help to build up the mutual relationship

effectively, how could those native local Hong Kong students enhance their 'shared

culture'? Findings from Samuel's (HK) responses may sound inspiring in this regard since his personal background and experience with the people from Mainland have altered his perception and attitude towards the Mainlanders to a great extent compared with his local counterparts who did not have such experience. This can be seen by Samuel's (HK) description of his Tsing Hua counterpart and the attitudes he took towards the joining of the Tsing Hua students. In fact, he was the only one who held the most affirmative and optimistic attitude towards the Tsing Hua students' presence among the fifteen Baptist responses. Using the geographic difference as a division, he said,

> [Students up there] ... always want to devote them to the country and have a
> sense of nationality. ... They have a stronger sense of success and want to
> contribute to their own society. (H5/24)

When asked what gave him such an impression, he explained, "I have many relatives up there. All of them are very bright, working as an engineer with the heart to build the country." (H5/30) Referring to his Tsing Hua counterpart as elites, he continued,

> ...At the beginning of the semester, I once assumed Li Qian (ML) as an
> enemy, thinking that Tsing Hua students must be very outstanding. But, if we
> haven't tried, how do we know who is brighter. After the examination, I found
> that my IQ is way far behind his level. So, I totally surrendered and found that
> I should learn from him. (H5/38)

Such a positive attitude was further confirmed when Samuel (HK) said how he felt about having more Tsing Hua students on campus. "...Since we have an opportunity to get in touch with students of such a high intellectual level. We should cherish the opportunity and study with them together." (H5/68) Not only the family background, but also personal experience has driven Samuel (HK) to view the Mainlanders completely different.

> I have been to Mainland twice to receive training in the armed force with other
> Mainland university students ... I have been in touch with the Mainland
> students and found them holding very different learning attitudes. (H5/130-

What is more, this experience has helped Samuel (HK) to become "more mature, knowing what to aim at instead of having fun all the time, and learning the attitude to take when getting along with others." (H5/140) Evidently, both Samuel's (HK) Mainland relatives and experience have helped to shape his discernment of the Mainlanders and Mainland students in particular.

6.5.3 Tsing Hua students' initiative to search for help

The third building block lies in the initiative of the Tsing Hua students derived from their practical needs. Unfortunately, the need to communicate was not found common among the Tsing Hua informants in this particular case. Only Gao Min (ML) sought help from one of her local counterparts to ask questions for her in class due to her limited Cantonese and this need ultimately helped to build their relationship (See Chapter 6.4.1.3).

Summary

To sum up, the findings in the present Chapter first support the idea that the quantity and the quality of the academic exchange are closely related to the level of the relationship among students of the two groups, while mutual communication is the key to creating their intercultural relationship. Without ample communication, they were not very likely to build the trust and support that are necessary for healthy competition in the academic context. Unfortunately, what was found from the above analysis was that although members of the two groups went through the class with each other everyday, they did not have much substantial communication. Because of the different spoken language, cultural diversity, situational and personality difference, and misconception of each other, their communication and interaction

remained restricted and shallow. Besides, the physical distance resulting from their different goals set mainly by the Tsing Hua students also jeopardized the opportunity of students from each side being together. For the Baptist informants, the problem was more their rooted perception that has hindered them from approaching their Tsing Hua counterparts and subsequently building their relationship. However, the findings also indicate that the communication and relationship between members of the two groups will be strengthened under three conditions, namely when they shared the same original cultural values, when the Hong Kong informants changed their perception of their Tsing Hua counterparts after getting more familiar with the Mainland students from their personal experience, and last when the Tsing Hua informants saw the need and, more important, were willing to seek help from their local counterparts. All three factors were found constructive to the development of the mutual relationship. Unfortunately, only very few informants among all have enjoyed the success of establishing an intercultural relationship through these three means.

CHAPTER 7 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The previous three chapters on data analysis in the present study has detailed a wide range of major findings essential to the investigation of the three aspects stated in Chapter 1.2. The completion of the last three chapters have also led us to the final part of the study, Part III, which encompasses three closing chapters, the present chapter, Chapter 8, and Chapter 9. The present chapter will give us a brief review of the important results from the findings before we move on to the discussion of these findings in Chapter 8 and implications and recommendations in Chapter 9. Hence, the purpose of this chapter is twofold:

1. to summarize the data associated with the impact of the scheme and come to some conclusions about whether the policy aims are being met, based on which to give an evaluation of the effectiveness of the policy in practice.

2. to review the adjustment and intercultural communication issues experienced both by the host group and their sojourners in the present study.

7.1 Effects of the Scheme and Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Policy

Findings concerning the academic impacts of the scheme presented in Chapter 4 can be classified into three main areas, namely the nurturing of academic exchange, the founding of positive competition, and the sharing of ideas on the Mainland between the two groups. Based on the above three important results and the informants' perceptions of the effectiveness of the scheme, a summary will be drafted to evaluate in what ways the scheme has met its three wished-for objectives.

7.1.1 Enhancement of intellectual ideas and skills

Academically, there existed 'cross-fertilisation of skills and ideas' between the Tsing Hua students and their Baptist counterparts in the present study, but both the quality

and the quantity were found unsatisfactory. By discussing and borrowing coursework from their Tsing Hua counterparts, the Baptist informants have benefited from the presence of the Tsing Hua students. However, the quantity of the intellectual exchange was found limited. More substantial intellectual exchanges took place in the tutorial lessons when group work was assigned, yet the discussions usually remained restricted due to the time constraint, and at times one-way delivery instead of two-ways exchange. In-depth discussions on academic work after class or off-campus were rarely reported. In a word, overall the exchange of intellectual ideas was often limited to assignments and class work given by the teachers, while the frequency was simultaneously subject to how often the students had to turn in their course work, and how often they had to work on their in-class academic tasks. Some may wonder whether the situation has changed over time. Unfortunately, the findings from some follow-up conversations with a smaller sample of both groups conducted at the end of the second year of the study did not support such an optimistic view.

7.1.2 Fostering of healthy competition

Substantial evidence suggests that more Baptist students were encouraged and inspired by the hard work and outstanding academic performance of their Tsing Hua counterparts. Unfortunately, this motivation of catching up and competing with their Tsing Hua counterparts was found unsustainable in most cases. Very often, long before the Baptist students had a visible improvement in their academic results, they have lapsed into their old ways for four decisive factors, namely the peer influence and pressure from their own group, their different living environment, their own belief in what contributes to one's success of study, and most important, the equally discouraging academic gap perceived by many Baptist counterparts. While most

Baptist students continued to study in the same way as before, accounts of two extreme cases were also reported. A few individual Baptist students were found highly motivated by the competition emerged due to their Tsing Hua counterparts' presence, and therefore, persistently studied very hard, whereas some others began to get jealous and this stirred an unhealthy competition among the peers.

7.1.3 Broadening of horizons on Mainland

Because of the restricted communication between students of the two groups, the non-academic exchange about the Mainland was also found partial, appearing only occasionally when related issues were raised during class discussions or teachers' lectures. In the daily conversations between students of the two groups, what the Baptist students learnt about their Tsing Hua counterparts was merely some information about their Tsing Hua counterparts' background. The Baptist informants did not really broaden their horizon on the Mainland; on the other hand, their Tsing Hua counterparts did widen their horizons on Hong Kong and the outside world.

7.1.4 Evaluation of the effectiveness of the policy and related comments

From the informants' point of view, the Policy set out with its reasonable objectives. Rationally, it is supposed to meet its aims, but practically did not seem to have worked out. Relatively speaking, the Tsing Hua informants appeared more optimistic about the effectiveness of the scheme than their Baptist counterparts. They assumed that their presence should generate certain effects on their local counterparts since they set them a new target and posted certain pressure. Though the Baptist students felt the same way, they did not see how it could be worked out in practice at least at the moment due to their constraint communication and when the limited intake number of Mainland students (altogether 11 in this first cohort) in the

University. Meanwhile, the local peers still remained more influential to the local students and the ways they study. Turning to other alternatives for motivating the local students, some local students thought that it would be more effective to send more local students to study in Mainland. With the much greater impact of the learning environment in Mainland and the larger number of Mainland students on the local students, there would be a greater chance to change the learning attitude, and thus the academic performance of the local students.

Given the substantial evidence provided in the findings as summarised above, a plausible conclusion about the effectiveness of the Policy can be drawn. As what has been revealed by most informants, it is concluded that the Policy has not reasonably met any of the three objectives set in Policy 1998 at the moment when the study was conducted since neither reasonable amount of academic exchange has emerged nor healthy competition has been established among students of the Hong Kong Chinese and the Mainland Chinese students. Nor did it serve as a promising channel for broadening the Hong Kong students' horizons on the Mainland. Although students of both sides welcomed the Policy, it did not turn out to be as effective and useful as it was expected to particularly in the specific context of the present study. On the contrary, it has generated some adverse social climate in the everyday classroom among certain groups. Having the Hong Kong students study in Mainland, conversely, were considered more realistic and effective. Lacking the counter adjustment of the administration work, curriculum changes, and clarification of language policy, some Mainland students were doomed to suffer. Without the support of the proper arrangement of class learning in some multi-level classes and more concern about the development of the local students' psychological health, the local students will be very likely to feel rather negatively about the competition

emerged. With the absence of the complementary support just mentioned, the introduction of excellent Mainland students into the university campuses in Hong Kong will most likely remain a sound but inappropriate nor sensible policy since it was based on common sense and wishful thinking rather than systematic and theoretically well-founded conceptions of inter-group interactions. Having said that, the Policy could be more feasible among some Hong Kong students with similar academic level as their Mainland counterparts do. This, however, has yet to be found out.

What was obvious, yet, was the lack of thought about how the hosts' need to react and adjust as disclosed above emerged to be a major failure of the scheme. Kim (1988) who contains parallel views makes the point that a complete communication model must look at change in both immigrants and hosts. In this regard, a communication model for the particular context of the present study will be modified and discussed in detail in the next chapter with which we can look at how the present findings can be explained by the theoretical literature and how they are understood elsewhere.

7.2 Cultural Adjustment and Intercultural Relationship

Summary in this aspect will include three major divisions: the Tsing Hua and Baptist students' perceptions of each other, the adjustment of the Tsing Hua students and their Baptist counterparts' counter adjustment, and lastly the intercultural communication and relationship of the two groups as well as the factors that affected the extension of their friendship.

7.2.1 Perception of each other - on personality and study

As revealed in the findings, both groups found each other nice, warm, and friendly. Specifically, almost all the Tsing Hua students were found incredibly hardworking, very intelligent, independent with absolutely clear focus on their study, which brought out the major difference between the Tsing Hua students and their Baptist counterparts. Relating to the academic performance of the two groups, it was found that almost all the Baptist informants agreed that there existed a distinct gap of academic standard between them and their Tsing Hua counterparts. Yet, the Tsing Hua informants thought that the root of the difference lay in the two groups' distinct learning attitude rather than their actual academic performance. In addition, the disparity was more a matter of different goal-orientation than a difference of learning strategies and classroom behaviour.

7.2.2 Tsing Hua students' adjustment

According to the findings, despite the lack of ample communication and close relationship with the local counterparts, most Tsing Hua informants did not find the adjustment a real problem since practically they felt they have moved from a poorer living environment to a better one. This inconsistency with findings from other studies of overseas Chinese students can be explained by the particular student exchange scheme they were in. Unlike many overseas Chinese students, the Tsing Hua students enjoyed decent financial support and living environment ensured by the scheme. Secondly, these sojourners came as a group of eleven Tsing Hua students after their one semester's being together in Beijing to prepare them for their coming. This setting has promised them with a more stable social tie with their original ethnic circle. Thirdly, they came with a higher academic status known to the public, which aroused concern and interest from the media. These three factors have

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fundamentally put them in a more advantaged situation in which they experienced

less complexity when adjusting to the new living environment. Having said that, the

findings suggest that the Tsing Hua students still experienced some initial culture

shock, feeling surprised at the new environment, experiencing loneliness, being

anxious to acquire the new spoken language, and having different diets. These

adjustment issues, however, were not as significant as their difficulties when trying

to immerse themselves into the local Hong Kong circle with which they met major

setbacks due to the group difference. They were given a warm welcome and ample

attention during the initial phase, but somehow felt socially isolated in their everyday

communication and away from the host circle.

7.2.3 Counter adjustment of the Baptist students

Similar to their Tsing Hua counterparts, the findings in this aspect suggest that the

greatest difficulties faced by the Baptist students lay in communication. A sense of

'incompatibility' was strongly felt by some informants who found it difficult to have

a common language, a common theme, in their conversations, which was considered

the chief problem on top of the spoken language. Nevertheless, the most striking

counter adjustment experienced by the Baptist students lay in the changes of their

learning environment, namely the language use in class, some teachers' shift of

attention, and most important, the competitive learning atmosphere brought by their

Tsing Hua counterparts. While they all welcomed the Mainland students and were

astonished by their excellent academic results, some felt both stimulated and

intimidated. They struggled with the dilemma of being able to study with some very

bright students and the threat of losing a better grade in their academic results. The

findings also indicate some resentment due to the use of Putonghua of the Tsing Hua

students and their teachers in class, which put the local students into darkness, and

the greater attention to the Tsing Hua counterparts given by some teachers.

In terms of coping strategies, they can be divided into the more positive ones, and the more negative ones with the rest remaining the same with no impact. The more positive Baptist students appreciated the company of their Tsing Hua counterparts and began to change their learning attitude and adjust their learning habits to catch up with them. Conversely, others tended to see how far they were lagged behind due to their Tsing Hua counterparts' presence and found it totally inappropriate to have two groups in the same class. It has caused difficulty for all three parties: the teacher, the Baptist students, as well as their Tsing Hua counterparts. Instead of adjusting to each other's difference, these frustrated students preferred the class to be separated.

7.2.4 Communication and relationship between the two groups

With regard to the communication between the Tsing Hua informants and their Baptist counterparts, two findings clearly stood out from their responses and supported by the observation. The first one is the way they described their relationship and intercultural communication, while the second is the barriers that lie between their communications. A majority of the Tsing Hua informants and their Baptist counterparts found their relationship harmonious, yet their communication unsatisfactory, appearing short, limited and superficial.

7.2.5 Hindering and facilitating factors emerged

The findings suggest that the causes of the limited exchange and healthy competition between the two groups appeared diverse and interconnected. Conversely, the interwoven factors can be abridged simply by what one of the Tsing Hua informants

pinpointed as the two groups were living in two different circles with different settings and friends. The findings further reveal the universal difficulties encountered by the Baptist students as well as their Tsing Hua counterparts in getting to know and interacting with each other due to the language barrier, different cultural and social backgrounds as many other overseas Chinese students encountered. Contextually, the underlying barriers that cannot be neglected were some Baptist students' low self-esteem caused by the academic gap between the two groups, their group identity that directed their in-group and out-group communication, as well as their goal orientations, learning habits and belief in academic pursuit. A comparison of case to case also exhibited the incompatibility of personality with the Tsing Hua counterparts in each individual class and the perception of how they viewed each other. In the following chapter, we shall dig into the "mess of language" from the findings and find out what lies underneath the "mess of thought" and the "tangle of behaviour," as cited previously in Chapter 3.7.2 (Hedges 1985:85).

CHAPTER 8 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

At the end of Chapter 7.1, a review of the students' perspective on the success of the scheme was given and showed, in brief, that the scheme was a well-wished one, but was not able to meet its objectives at the operational level. In this chapter we shall discuss the findings in relation to theory of cultural adjustment and intercultural interaction to seek an explanation of what the students felt was not successful. To do so, we shall post the discussion from the following two perspectives:

1. From a cultural perspective with the use of Kim's (1988) integrative approach, and others' intercultural communication frameworks (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997; Spitzberg, 2000; Ting-Toomey, 1999), the first part of this chapter attempts to put the specific findings into a broader context and to use the above theories to understand why the policy was not as successful as hoped.

2. From a contextual perspective of the learning environment, the second part of this chapter endeavors to discuss how the specific learning elements in the classroom setting affected the accomplishment of the scheme.

8.1 Understanding the Findings within an Intercultural Communication · Framework

A backtrack of the source of the adjustment and communication difficulties immediately brings the diverse perceptions of group difference expressed by both groups back into sight. This emergent phenomenon accounts for the perceived cultural difference (PCD) (Dodd, 1998), a major cause for people of two regions to become 'strangers' as Gudykunst and Kim (1984) phrased. By perception, Singer (1987:9) means "the process – and it is a process – by which an individual selects, evaluates, and organizes stimuli from the external environment." Naturally, one often judges and views these external spurs from where he stands based on his own

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cultural identity, personal identity, and previous experience. In the present case, the findings support that it was the more profound identity difference and conflict of interests between the two groups that shaped their diverse perceptions, which directly affected their intercultural communication competence in three dimensions, mainly motivation, knowledge, and skills of managing intercultural contacts. By examining the self-conception of members of the two groups, we will discover how they categorized themselves and others, how they reacted to such categorization and were affected by it, and how they interacted with other groups under this categorizing, which are the major issues raised in the concept of social identity theory (e.g., Abrams & Hoggs, 1990; Brewer & Miller, 1996; Tajfel, 1981). Hence, let's start by examining the students' perceived diverse identities and conflict of interests.

8.1.1 Self-identity and intercultural communication

8.1.1.1 Perceived identity difference

Identity, the way individuals identify who they are by categorizing themselves and others in terms of their belonging to groups in various spheres, was found to be one of the most significant hindering factors in the communication between the two groups. Ward and Searle (1991), and Ward and Kennedy (1992c) respectively found in their study that sojourners with a strong cultural identity of their own ethnic group experienced more social difficulty in adjusting to the host culture. In the present study, the entrenched self-identification revealed by the spontaneous perceptual division of the two groups implies their rather distant identity in four facets: the self-identity as a person from a different place, a different culture, a different socioeconomic status, and a different level of academic group.

First of all, a marked regional identification was deeply embedded in the Hong Kong

students, while there was an even stronger national identity in their Mainland counterparts. Regarding the Mainland counterparts respectively as *keui dei* (they), *an dei* (others), *oi an* (outsiders), and *dai yi dao di an* (people from another place), some local students seemed to have drawn a clear boundary between the two groups. This was also intensely felt by some of their Mainland counterparts who directly found themselves as 'aliens' in the eyes of their local counterparts. Living in the same country, many local students, however, differentiated strongly Hong Kong from Mainland China. They often identify themselves as *huen gong an* ('Hong Kong people' in Cantonese) instead of Chinese, indicating the different territory they are from. Their association with Mainland China was rather weak due to the long sovereignty of the British government. In opposition, born and raised in Mainland, the Mainland students in the present study also bore a clear and strong national and social identity of Mainland Chinese. Findings in the class observation support that many of them had a great passion for China, felt proud of being Chinese, and determined to contribute to their country in future. This was also noted by some of their Hong Kong counterparts like Samuel (HK). The national or regional identity of the two groups was such a core and fundamental identity that it embodied the essential difference of individuals of the two groups.

Secondly, in the same line with the above legal status of one's national and regional identity is the distinct cultural identity of the two groups. Defined as "the emotional significance that we attach to our sense of belonging or affiliation with the larger culture," Ting-Toomey (1999:30-31) ranks 'cultural identity' as the very first of the four salient primary identity domains that requires our mindfulness and understanding when communicating across cultures. Although members of both groups were racially Chinese, they bore very different cultural values. This has been

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supported by Vasil and Yoon (1996) who found a significant difference among Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan, China and Malaysia and therefore reminded us not to overgeneralise them as a homogeneous group. As shown in the findings, the different cultural identity of the Hong Kong students and their Mainland counterparts can be noted ranging from realms as practical as the different food they liked and as abstract as the different perceptual values and beliefs they contained. Language is found to be one of the most important means by which groups identify themselves from others. The different spoken languages, Putonghua for the Mainland students, and Cantonese for their Hong Kong counterparts, stood out as the first key marker of boundaries between the two cultural groups. What appeared most striking, however, were the very contrasting views they respectively shared indicating their distinct values, attitudes, and belief in various aspects. Two typical commonly mentioned ones were the Mainland students' intrinsic motivation versus their local counterparts' extrinsic motivation when approaching learning tasks, as well as the Mainland students' long term academic pursuit and life plan versus their local counterparts' short-term degree accomplishment followed by job realization. As Berry et al. (1987) realize, this incompatibility in behaviour, attitudes, and values between the two cultures may result in psychological distress. Gudykunst (1998) also reminds us how immensely these cultural identities influence our daily communication, and how often we tend to take them for granted and fail to be aware of this constant influence.

Thirdly, what lies behind this classification of different territories and cultures is the different socioeconomic status of the two groups. As revealed by, for example, Saddlemire's (1996) studies on how white undergraduates viewed their African American counterparts, the perceived gap between the two racial groups may be

more truthfully identified as a gap of socioeconomic status instead of that of racial status. At the time when the study was conducted, Hong Kong still enjoyed a relatively higher socioeconomic status than Mainland. It was not uncommon to hear that the local students would not like to be misrecognised as Mainland Chinese as the living standard of the two places was perceived very various, which gave them a different level of socioeconomic identity.

The last but probably the most prominent identity difference between the two groups in this particular context is the Hong Kong students' self-definition of them being the lower academic group in contrast to the exceptionally high academic level of their Mainland counterparts. This strong and ingrained self-image was partly built by their personal actualization and partly through the media's overwhelming publicity. As indicated in the findings, having not been able to enter the two more prestigious universities, Chinese University of Hong Kong and The University of Hong Kong, many local students like Samuel (HK) found themselves losers in their academic path. Eventually landing in the Science majors that were less popular compared with other business majors further reinforced the self-stereotyping of some local students. This was clearly mirrored by the way they contrasted their academic results to that of their Mainland counterparts, with the Mainland group reaching an average GPA of '3.5' to '3.95', whereas most local counterparts barely '2.5' and at best '3'. Another voice that strengthened this distinction of the two groups was the message in the mass media through which the students were signaled which group they belonged to and this social climate in the society has largely influenced the social climate inside the university. Identified as 'outstanding' in the Chief Executive Policy Address 1998, the Mainland group's arrival and stupendous academic performance still caught major attention in the mass media after almost two years of their stay (*Ming*

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Pao, 20 December, 2000). Conversely, the local Hong Kong students were often criticized for their declining academic competence especially in the language aspect in comparison with that of their Mainland counterparts (*Ming Pao*, 20 April 2001). As Chow (2001) points out, early in 1994 or 1995, the English and the Chinese language standards of those graduated in Shanghai have outperformed those from the Hong Kong local universities (*Sing Dao Daily*, 9 April 2001). Both their self-stereotyping and the media's constant comparison of the academic standard of the two groups have put students of the two groups consciously and unconsciously through a group separation. A feeling of segregation from each other and statements such as "even we (the local students) don't like to listen to the class, we don't want to disturb 'others' who are interested in the study," by Matthew (HK) (H2/42) as cited in Chapter 6.6.5.1 and "...sometimes I feel only they (the Tsing Hua students) can do it (the Mathematics tasks), but we can't" by Amanda (HK) (H8/103) have definitely illustrated how the Hong Kong students set themselves apart from their Mainland counterparts. This contextual group division was also surprisingly found among the Mainland students as one of the Tsing Hua students shared the following insight:

> I think the key to our adjustment lies in our mindset. We (the Tsing Hua students) must first forget that we came from Tsing Hua [University] if we want to communicate with the local students. The wall between us can be removed if we are willing to put ourselves in the local group. For example, when positioning myself into the present context, I would think of 'we' accounting students, instead of 'I' a Tsing Hua student. I think the problem with some Tsing Hua students is that they often view the local students as 'you' Hong Kong students. (Yang Jing, M1a/13-16)

To put it more explicitly, it means that Yang Jing (ML) has laid down her original identity. Instead of regarding herself as a Tsing Hua student, she has adopted the Major faculty she belonged to as her new identity in this contextual environment.

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Unlike most of her Tsing Hua counterparts, Yang Jing (ML) was able to put herself into the local group using their 'majors' as a boundary marker rather than 'Hong Kong students' and 'Tsing Hua students'. Instead of applying her 'primary identities' (cultural identity, ethnic identity, gender identity, and personal identity), Yang Jing has put on her 'situational identities' (role identity, relational identity, facework identity, and symbolic interaction identity) (Ting-Toomey, 1999:29) in her cross-cultural communication. This change of mindset, a crucial step that breaks the ice of intercultural communication between the two different cultural groups discovered by Yang Jing (ML), has truly manifested what Ting-Toomey (ibid.:26) coined as the identity negotiation theory in her recent work described in Chapter 2.3. By acknowledging the common situational identity with her local counterparts, Yang Jing (ML) has formed the intention of her message to be the same as her local counterparts', and therefore, ascertained a higher degree of 'shared meanings' in her intercultural communication process (ibid.:19). By a high level of 'shared meanings,' Ting-Toomey (ibid.) refers to the accurate understanding of the message in three aspects: the decoding of the verbal 'content meaning,' the mastery of 'identity meaning' that shows hidden message like respect or polite rejection, and the comprehension of the nonverbal 'relational meaning' that indicates the power distance and relational distance between two interlocutors. Unfortunately, Yang Jing (ML) was the only one among the Mainland group who was willing to initiate this internal change to reach for external intercultural relationship and communication. What, however, has to be made clear here is that Yang Jing (ML) was the only native Cantonese speaker among the Mainland group. Compared with her other ten Mainland counterparts in the present study, objectively she could alter her situational identity more easily since many of her local counterparts could not differentiate her from other local students.

8.1.1.2 Perceived conflict of interests

Having a different self-identity alone may not necessarily draw the strangers and the hosts away from each other. This social distance, however, will be more likely to arise when competition between groups for scarce resources takes place. In this particular context, what amplified to the different identity and triggered the social distance between the two groups were respectively the competition for both their present academic performance and future job searching. This outcry of the pressure and fear of academic failure was made clear in the present findings described in Chapter 6.1.2. Most of the Hong Kong informants were anxious about falling behind in comparison with the academic results of their Mainland counterparts. It was felt so pressing that the local students of a certain department held public meeting to discuss how to cope with it (See Chapter 6.1.2). The competitive situation among the two groups, however, was not heightened until the striving for the same job market became emergent as the new policies of admitting Mainland professionals and allowing the Mainland undergraduate students to work in Hong Kong after their graduation were announced in the Government's 2001-2002 Budget on 7 March 2001 (Tsang, 2001). While the Mainland students welcomed the implementation of this new policy though not many of them would actually choose to work and stay, most of their Hong Kong counterparts began to worry about their future. Describing her immediate thought, one of the local university students, Lilvia, who has some Mainland students in her current class worried and frankly said,

> 'the rice bowl' (the Chinese saying of 'a job') will be grabbed. Very large
> pressure, in the class [they] have already competed with us [academically], not
> to say competing for jobs in the future!' (*Sing Dao Daily*, 8 March 2001).

She also stressed, "the [Hong Kong] economy is not good, and they still come to compete with us!" (ibid.). This accounts for the very first threat, realistic threats,

outlined by Stephan et al. (1997) who argue that the other three primary kinds of threats that lead groups to be prejudiced toward one another consist of symbolic threats, inter-group anxiety, and negative stereotypes (quoted in Stephan et al., 1998). Although several government officials have publicly expressed their doubt about whether the local students' security of job will be jeopardized by the prospective Mainland graduates in Hong Kong, the fact is that this threat has already been well perceived among many Hong Kong tertiary students. As Singer (1987) notes:

> It is not the stimulus itself that produces specific human reactions and/or actions but rather how the stimulus is perceived by the individual that matters most for human behavior. It is perhaps the most basic law of human behavior that people act or react on the basis of the way in which they perceive the external world. (p.9)

Compared with the expected competition in the job market, the competition for teacher's attention and occupation of time for the students to express their thoughts and asking questions in class was more trivial yet also worth-noting. In this regard, Johnson and Johnson (1991) in their studies identify that conflict of interest is likely to lead to some destructive effects like poor interpersonal relationship between the sojourners and the receiving community. Subsequently, it is not difficult to imagine why some local students could not see their Mainland counterparts as *chi gei an* ('insider' in Cantonese).

Summary

In brief, the above discussion on the identity perception of the Hong Kong students and their Mainland counterparts has articulated two particular perceptual barriers behind their intercultural communication and relationship. They are the different and rather exclusive identities, from the national, cultural, socioeconomic to academic

perspectives. What reinforced this gap is the competition at school and at the workplace the hosts perceived between the two groups. Only with one of the Mainland informants who were able to put aside her original academic label in particular and put on a new group identity in association with her local counterparts was the communication gap found alleviated. In the discussion of the next section, we will further explore how the perceived identity differentiation and conflict of interests have caused their identification with each other and shaped their intercultural communication competence.

8.1.2 From identity difference to intercultural communication competence

Grounded in the above examination of the two groups' different self-identity, discussion in this section will move forward to unravel first how the identity difference has created separated group identifications among the two groups, and second, how the separated group identifications affected the two groups' intercultural communication competence and were reflected in the interpersonal communication correspondingly with their own ethnic group and the opposite group.

8.1.2.1 From identity to identification with each other

With a clear identification of the Hong Kong identity, Hong Kong culture, higher socioeconomic status but lower academic status, the Hong Kong students in the present study drew a patent line between them and their Mainland counterparts who equally maintained a strong recognition of their own national, cultural and intellectual identity. These boundaries together with the conflict of interests both in class and in the future job market have inevitably bound the students into two different circles. The conceptualization of the four modes of acculturation, ranging from integration, assimilation, and marginalization determined by the relative

strengths of identification with the stranger's ethnic group and the host group (Berry et al., 1987) can be borrowed and modified in this regard although this classification was meant to describe the adaptation pattern of sojourners only. Bearing a strong identification with their own ethnic group, but weaker identification with their opposite group, and most important, the anticipated competition in the workplace, most students of the Mainland and the Hong Kong group in the present study can but be identified as 'separated' individuals. These findings are broadly consistent with what was found among most the overseas Chinese graduate students in American by Chen (1998) and Ting-Toomey's (1999) claim about the great impact of one's self-conception on his cognitions, emotions, and interactions in cross-cultural communication as explained in Chapter 2.3.2.2. Having said that, the long-term modification of the self-identity of the two groups, however, remains to be investigated and clarified.

8.1.2.2 From separated identification to intercultural communication competence

The sense of detachment derived from their separated identification of the two groups mentioned above can be further affirmed by the description of their intercultural encounters in which they have exposed their inadequate intercultural communication competence. A review of the various concepts of intercultural communication competence in Chapter 2.3 shows that the wide-ranging components can be mainly classified into motivation, knowledge and skills (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997; Spitzberg, 2000; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984; Ting-Toomey, 1999). These three components interrelate with each other and form a cycle of either positive progress or negative regress in cross-cultural communication. To facilitate our discussion on the sojourners' communication, the cognitive, affective and operational competence outlined by Kim (1988) will be used to evaluate the sojourners' degree

of host communication competence, integrated with others' work to describe the intercultural communication competence between the two groups. Special highlight will also be given to the lack of "interdependence of adaptation" of the two groups, a significant yet often neglected area in intercultural communication (Samovar & Porter, 2000:386).

Motivation

Motivation, the desire and need to communicate with strangers, ranks the very foremost component in any communication, especially in intercultural communication since communicators need to make extra effort and bear extra risk in this context. Among the many motivating factors, what is most destructive and fundamental in the present context is the Mainland students' lack of desire to initiate the communication and mix with their local counterparts, identified as 'adaptive motivation' by Kim (1988:99). One of the Hong Kong informants, Paul (HK), in particular pinpointed this lack of motivation and time his Tsing Hua put in their relationship as mentioned in Chapter 5.2.2.2. This lack of motivation mainly derives from two subjective and two objective aspects: the views of their goals of transferring to Hong Kong or the way they position themselves in the society in the long-term, and the perceived incompatibility with their local counterparts, the objective financial security offered, and the more promising emotional support from their Tsing Hua or Mainland peers in comparison with that from their host group.

The first subjective barrier originated from the Mainland students' different identities as described in Section 8.1.1 has been detailed in Chapter 6.4.2.3. Unlike those overseas Chinese students as seen in Zhong's study (1996) who anticipated to settle in the country, most Mainland students in the present study regarded Hong Kong as a

springboard to reach the outside world for their further studies. They thus were less motivated to adjust themselves to fit in the new culture. The contact with their local counterparts served but an opportunity to learn from what they fell short of Hong Kong people, leaving them with little or no desire to truly get to know and understand the lives of their Hong Kong peers, as affirmed by Tang Ziyong (ML) (7a/20). In this way, as their perception of "potential benefits" decreases relative to the "potential costs" of the course of the contact (Spitzberg, 2000:378), the less motivated they become to pursue more encounters with their local counterparts. They thus did not show much endeavor to extend their communication to adjust to the current social and cultural context. Their 'goal directedness' (Locke, et al., 1981) and the position they foresaw for themselves as highly intellectual academics drove them not to spend too much time in their social life, sometimes even with their Mainland peers. In his study, Bourne (1975) also found similar qualities about the overseas Chinese students who study extraordinarily harder and longer, appearing rather socially passive (See Chapter 2.2).

The second practical need that this particular group of Mainland sojourners lacked was the need to secure their financial support. With a decent and promising scholarship granted by the Hong Kong Jockey Club as mentioned earlier in Chapter 1.1 and some part-time research work given by their individual teachers, they did not have the need to approach the local people for jobs and opportunity to secure their expenditure in Hong Kong, unlike other Mainland students abroad who often found their financial burden a difficulty in facing the new environment (Feng, 1991). As important as the above financial support is the more promising emotional support this particular group obtained from their own Tsing Hua group coming together and their other Mainland peers on campus. The availability of this affective dependence

again lessened their need to approach their local counterparts in time of loneliness, which will be further discussed in the interpersonal communication of the two groups later in this section. Whether this social passivity was caused by the Chinese males' specific personality traits like that in Bourne's (1975) study was not found clear in the present findings since there were males and females appearing socially passive consistently. However, how the Mainland students of different sexes in the present study responded and reacted to the socio-cultural adjustment can be fascinating and requires further investigation.

The above two situational factors eliminated the need for the sojourners to mingle with the host community, which was considered a crucial drive for strangers to adjust to the host society (Kim, 1988). Together with their experience of the incompatibility analysed in Chapter 6.4.2, many of them were more an observer of the new culture instead of a participant. This is largely in line with what McLemore (1970) observes as an individual being a member of a system in a spatial sense, but not be a member in a social sense (quoted in Rogers 1999).

Turning to the Hong Kong group, the discouraging factors for them to approach their Mainland counterparts were less obvious, more individual depending on how they each identified with their Tsing Hua counterparts as mentioned in Section 8.1.1, and at times more situational depending on how the Mainland students identified with them in each contextual situation. The three more obvious hindering factors actually were noted during the interface of their communication. They are the "diffuse anxiety" and "unpredictability" (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997: 257-258) to correspond to the communicating performance of individual interlocutor they encountered, and the "approach-avoidance tendencies" of some Mainland counterparts (ibid., 259). With

the perception of the incompatibility of the two groups, the Hong Kong students revealed their social anxiety of what to/not to say and what to expect when conversing with their Mainland counterparts. This widely reported fear of uncertainty and unfamiliarity (Gudykunst, 1995; Kim 1988) usually found among sojourners was unexpectedly found common among the host group in this case. It has practically stopped some initial encounters from taking off, and some follow-up contact from springing up. Having said that, most members in this host group tended to react according to how their intercultural interlocutor reacted to their approach. The more enthusiastic, sensitive and willing to change their communicating habit their Mainland counterparts were, the more likely the Hong Kong students perceived a rewarding outcome of their encounters, and the more they would extended and expanded their communication and relationship. However, in response to some Mainland counterparts' physical distance in class and after class, the host group can but be left wondering and confused about what happened to their sojourning counterparts. This communication avoidance shown by some Mainland students for various reasons discussed above primarily decreased the chance for Hong Kong counterparts to socialize with them and to enhance their knowledge and skills of communicating with each other for both groups as a result.

Knowledge

Among the seven domains of knowledge outlined by Ting-Toomey (1999:49), what the sojourners in the study appeared to fall short of were the ways their host counterparts think, perceive, and respond to their messages (Kim, 1988), neither did their local counterparts feel competent to decode their underneath message. This can be seen by both parties' overwhelming voicing of the 'incompatible' patterns of thought that disabled them from getting their messages across and extending their

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communication. Together with the ignorance of the host non-verbal behaviour and communication rules, the Tsing Hua informants were not able to raise their sense of social belonging using the host language. Three obvious pieces of evidence that illustrate this point can be found in the classroom discourses described by the Baptist informants. In both episodes, the Tsing Hua informants were found too enthusiastic about questioning and sharing their opinions, leaving little time for their Baptist counterparts to express themselves. This especially stirred the conflict of interests as primarily they spoke in Putonghua, which was incomprehensible to their counterparts, and practically classroom participation was graded as part of the final assessment the students received at the end of the semester. Another scenario (Observation1, 29 October 1999) was an English group discussion observed during class observation in which the only Tsing Hua informant in the group was again found too forceful in putting forward his idea, making one of his local counterparts give up and resume using Cantonese instead of English as this stopped the Tsing Hua informant from continuing and limited the discussion among the local counterparts in the group only. What can be noted from the above evidence is the significance of group difference in intercultural communication. Organizational rules and regulations are usually formally coded and learned gradually through everyday socialization (Kim, 1988) but what were shown above were the subtle communication rules informally coded among different groups. Both the Tsing Hua informants and their Baptist counterparts were fresh graduate secondary students who were experiencing quite a dramatic transition to university, yet their different academic performance put them in the very two ends of the scale demonstrated by their level of confidence, interest and motivation in learning, and consequently actual classroom behaviour. Instead of being aware of the two ethnic groups' universal difference, "to communicate effectively we must understand real differences"

between our group and the specific counter group (Gudykunst, 1998:219). It was these real differences that require them to have much more sensitivity and effort for both the sojourning and the host groups to adjust. The one semester preparatory courses designed for the Tsing Hua informants did help them to get to know more about the Hong Kong society, but definitely not the features of Hong Kong students, not to say the particular characteristics of their Hong Kong counterparts at the University.

Apart from the communicative knowledge used in the interface communication, what both groups really lacked was the "culture-sensitive knowledge" (Ting-Toomey, 1999:50). They failed to "negotiate shared meanings, manage different goals, and regulate identity and relational issues." (ibid.) The three reported episodes, two related to the lengthy question asking and opinion sharing in class by some sojourners as disclosed in Chapter 6.4.1.2, and the perceived competition for better grades by the host group in Chapter 6.1.2 can illustrate how both groups lacked the kind of awareness or mindfulness (ibid.), and courage to confront their difference. Instead of choosing a positive or "alternative interpretations" (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997:264) and confronting them properly and openly, the Hong Kong counterparts often kept the mentioned incidents as underlying conflicts. Although these conflict management strategies can be attributed to the emphasis of maintaining harmonious, peaceful relations with others in Chinese culture, the outcome has not been as constructive to the development of their mutual understanding. The knowledge of group differences (ibid.) or in-group and out-group boundary (Ting-Toomey, 1999) did not seem to help the two groups to behave appropriately and effectively, but to distance them from each other.

Skills

The above discussion on conflict management between the two groups directly brought us to the lack of "ability to be mindful," the very first skill essential for intercultural communicators (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997). Since intercultural communication involves people with different cultures with which they mold their different values, attitudes, perceptions, habits, and behaviours, the interlocutors need to be extraordinary careful and conscious if they are to communicate effectively and appropriately. Knowing what to say, when to say, and most important, how to say it require much more than the 'cognitive differentiation and integration' (Kim, 1988). What students of both groups fell short of in this aspect can be discussed in three aspects: the kind of awareness or mindfulness they possessed, the cognitive flexibility (Kim, 1988) they adjusted to this mindfulness, followed by the behavioral flexibility (Duran, 1983; Gudykunst & Kim, 1997) they adopted correspondently.

Firstly, as evidenced by the discussion on identity difference, members of the Hong Kong groups were more than capable of understanding or capturing what their Mainland counterparts were like. To them, what may have hampered their intercultural communications can well be their hyperawareness (Lindsley, 1999) of the two groups' difference instead of their unawareness. The fear of competition and out-group communication stemmed from their mindfulness of the group difference has somehow set the Hong Kong group apart from their Mainland counterparts. Along similar lines, their self-identification as a high academic group of some Mainland students in the study also pulled themselves out of this intercultural communication. Rather than the deficiency of a mindfulness of the human dimension, members of both groups appeared to lack the mindfulness of 'matter' dimension. They were not prepared to "expect problems" within intercultural

communication nor to "accept criticism of the values" shared by their own social group (Byram, 1996:20) nor to accept the strangers' differences. Since the Mainland sojourners in the present study was the first group introduced into the undergraduate programmes in the University, a majority of both groups were inexperienced in intercultural communication and unaware of the values of experiencing life with people of different cultural group. They thus tended to intuitively place their own interests prior to the intercultural relationship in times of conflicts without realizing how crucial these "identity valuation" skills (Ting-Toomey, 1999:53) are in ensuring the dissimilar other of their being respected, accepted, trusted, and included in intercultural encounters. In Byram's (1996:21) words, they lacked the attitudes of "... readiness to suspend disbelief and judgement with respect to others' meanings, beliefs and behaviours."

Secondly, what has just been examined directly led us to the discussion of the two groups' "cognitive flexibility" (Kim, 1988:96) or "flexible adaptive skills" (Ting-Toomey, 1999:49). As presented in the findings, members of the local group tended to be more mentally elastic to handle this intercultural communication than their Mainland sojourners mainly due to the Mainland students' different expectation on interpersonal relationship. Parallel findings were described by Chen (1998) in her study on the mature Mainland students in the United States. What was contrary in this case is that the group that expected a closer relationship was not the sojourning group, but the host group. As clearly as Zheng Wenshan (ML) put it, "I can [be closer friends with the local students], but I don't want to" (M5a/8) for the reasons mentioned in Chapter 8.1.2.1. Using Searle and Ward's (1990) distinction of two types of cross-cultural adjustment, we can find that the Mainland sojourners in socioculturally capable of fitting in the host culture, but not psychologically well

enough to invest their psychic energy and precious time in establishing an intercultural human relationship. Two other cases reflecting this unwillingness to change were related to some Mainland students' lengthy question asking in Chapter 6.4.1.2 and opinion sharing that occupied other local counterparts' class time as described in Chapter 4.2.1. Without the mindfulness of the disturbance caused by their long questions and sharing, and their unwillingness to give up their own hardworking tradition as their Baptist counterparts saw it, these Tsing Hua counterparts have, however, indirectly built a communication gap between them and their Baptist counterparts in this case.

This more obvious cognitive inflexibility was found not as clear among the local students since some of them simply found no opportunity to communicate with their Tsing Hua counterparts, while others adjusted their mental flexibility according to the way each individual Tsing Hua counterpart reacted to them. With the Tsing Hua counterparts who were willing to slow down their Putongua and use some Cantonese, they tended to be more willing to extend their communication; whereas with those who kept their own way of speaking or simply avoided communicating with them, they would rather give up on it. Little noticeable communication inadaptability was found among the Hong Kong counterparts. They were so intimidated by these non-Cantonese speakers, their different dressing and behaviour, and their remarkable academic performance that they were not willing to take the initiative to approach them even when they had a chance, admitted by Patricia (HK) and Katherine (HK). In other words, these informants have failed to achieve what Duran (1983) called 'communication adaptability', which involves:

> 1) The requirement of both cognitive (ability to perceive) and behavioral (ability to adapt) skills; 2) Adaptation not only of behaviors but also interaction goals; 3) The ability to adapt to the requirements posted by different

communication contexts; and 4) The assumption that perceptions of communicative competence reside in the dyad. (p.320)

Having said that communicating and understanding takes time and psychic energy, what appeared most significant here in the present context is the will it takes for the communicators from both the sojourning group and the receiving group.

8.1.3 The inter and intra-cultural communication of the two groups

The above review has displayed a comprehensive picture of how the identity recognition of both the Hong Kong students and their Mainland counterparts greatly influenced the students' motivation, knowledge and skills to activate or stretch their intercultural communication. Discussion in this section will move on to the intercultural and intra-cultural communication pattern formed by the Hong Kong group and their Mainland counterparts, resulting from the cycle of influence that evolved between identity identification and intercultural communication competence. As evidenced by the different voices of the Tsing Hua students and their Baptist counterparts, both groups have experienced different degrees of adjustment in two major domains, the cultural and learning aspects. A parallel discussion of the findings will thus be used to understand how their difficulties in both psychological and sociocultural adjustment to the new campus environment have hindered the development of their intercultural communication and thus the academic exchange and healthy competition among them. This is in line with the discussion on the significance of collaborative effort derived from both the stranger and the host environment in the success of cross-cultural adjustment (Kim, 1995) through the increase of their intercultural and interpersonal communication (Kim, 1988). This will bring out a modified communication model for the context of the present study that consists of three main forces standing in the midst of the intercultural

communication between the two groups. They are the host environment, predisposition of both sides, the intercultural communication between the two groups, and the intra-cultural communication between Mainland students and their own ethnic Mainland group, and that between the Hong Kong students and their local peers.

8.1.3.1 A modified communication model for the present study

Based on Kim's (1988:79) communication model (See Figure 2 in Appendix 5) and part of Singer's (1987:11) belief system as described in Chapter 2.3, the proposed modified model aims to fully illustrate the findings in the present study in a plausible and systematic way. Instead of concentrating on the strangers' cultural adjustment through communicating with the host as many (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1988; McGuire & McDermott, 1988) note and that with their ethic group as Kim (1988) suggests, the present model was turned into a communication model that emphasizes a two-ways pattern with two dimensions of communication between the Mainland Chinese and the Hong Kong Chinese students. By two ways, it refers to the pushing force from both the strangers and their hosts to stir and to enrich their intercultural communication; by two dimensions, it regards the pushing force just mentioned and the pulling force from their own peer group with respect to the development of their intercultural communication. The present model bears the same essence as Kims' prominence on the pertinence of cross-cultural communication and communication competence in intercultural adjustment. What is further stressed is the hosts' willingness to initiate, their awareness of the cultural difference, as well as their counter compliance to change. Rather than focusing on individual adjustment, the present model was shifted to a group-based adjustment since the findings tended to suggest a group phenomenon. To best portray the communication pattern derived

from the outcomes of the findings collected, the present model begins with the different belief system of members of both groups, rather than the host communication competence of the stranger in Kim's (1988) model. Constructed by the different identities, perceptions, attitudes, and values, this belief system incites both the strangers and their host counterparts to form their decisions whether to initiate the interaction with the strangers, and if so, to what extent. Starting from this motivation to begin their intercultural encounters, they in return reinforce their knowledge and skills of handling intercultural communication, which again give them an incentive to further their contacts. Having said that, the increase of cross-cultural encounters did not necessarily promise mutual adjustment and motivation towards the institution of harmonious relations as indicated by the unpleasant experience expressed by several local counterparts in Chapter 4.1 and Chapter 4.2, which is coherent with what Ward and Kennedy (1993) found in their study. The results were highly situated; depending on the individual host, the stranger, and the specific situation they were in each case (it was detailed in Chapter 6.4.6). The model ends with the final outcomes, including 'functional fitness,' psychological health,' and 'intercultural identity' suggested by Kim (1988). Though the results in this aspect were far from clear at the moment when the study was conducted, some follow-up conversations at the end of the study hint that the Mainland students' language competence has been improved, but whether they were more "socially acceptable" and "interpersonally effective" (Ady, 1995:93) was another story since most of them confined to their own Mainland circle most of the time (Gao Min, M10a/12-14; Liang Ming, M3a/8), while their Hong Kong counterparts had even fewer contact with them as time passed since they attended different classes (H8a/5-7). And, the outcomes of this mutual adjustment in a longer term are yet to be explored.

The aim of this section is thus to reveal, adapting Kim's (1995:178) concept of one's growth through cultural adjustment experience, the "dialectic relationship between push and pull" between the intercultural communication and the intra-cultural communication among students in the process of their communication and cultural adjustment since what was brought out in the current case is the demand of the hosts' communication skills, which was found equally crucial to the achievement of the strangers' intercultural communication. And, this is the time when the host environment and the predisposition (Kim, 1988), the two additional constructs that affect both the communication competence and the quality and quantity of intercultural communication.

8.1.3.2 The host environment

These often-neglected societal and cultural conditions of the host environment, as Kim (ibid.) considers, form a direct impact on the adjustment of the sojourners. Understandably, if the hosts appear more receptive toward strangers and put less pressure on the strangers to conform to the host group, the strangers will find it easier to adjust to the host cultural environment, as they are included while still remaining who they are. In this regard, the findings show a rather contradictory phenomenon. Generally speaking, the host group in the present study was found approachable, though some had the tendency of excluding ousiders. They recognized the strengths of their Mainland counterparts, but were somehow unwilling to receive them to stay and work in Hong Kong for the reasons discussed earlier in Section 8.1.1. The pressure of conformity was not strong though some individuals preferred the group to be homogeneous for easier communication and stronger group spirit. In a word, the overall host climate was a supportive one. It, however, did not guarantee the communication between the two groups being a successful one as members of each

group most members of the two groups did not made their fundamental change of their sense of self at least at the situational level. It was still hard for them to "accommodate information and experiences within the new culture" (Ryder, et al., 2000:49) and new situation.

8.1.3.3 Predisposition of both sides

As observed across the findings, different students with different personality traits responded to the opportunity of having intercultural encounters differently. Following Kim's constructs of 'preparedness', 'ethnicity', and 'personality' in association with cross-cultural adaptation, it was evidenced that members of both groups were not well equipped with the necessary skills or psychological expectancy of the encounters. Many local students were totally innocent of the occurrence of their Mainland counterparts on campus, while those who have the Mainland counterparts did not realize their presence till the Mainland students started uttering their broken Cantonese. Even some teachers were ignorant of what was going on. Though the Mainland students have received one year preparatory training before their study with their local counterparts, they were not provided with the necessary language acquisition and adequate input to fill the knowledge gap between their secondary school curriculum and that of Hong Kong. Turning to the issue of ethnicity, though both groups shared similar ethnic characteristics, they did not naturally attracted to each other and receive a higher degree of receptivity due to the identity difference and conceived conflicts as discussed earlier in Section 8.1.1 in the present chapter. Last but not least, individual difference on the top of cultural difference was accounted for the different outcome of each individual case. Each of the informants bore a different degree of 'openness' and 'strength' that ultimately brought the cross-cultural contacts to a distinct ending and this has been largely

revealed in Chapter 6.4.6. On the whole, it was the Mainland students' unwillingness to open them to fit in the host social environment and their Hong Kong counterparts' unwillingness to accept and manage differences that hampered the mutual 'compatibility' from coming into sight.

8.1.3.3 Sojourners' intercultural communication with the host and intra-cultural communication with the ethnic group

One of the core arenas that reflect the strangers' interpersonal communication is the 'relational networks' subjectively chosen and objectively reached by the Mainland students (Kim, 1988:106-107). By focusing on the structure and contents of relational networks of the sojourners at a given time, Kim particularly examines the size and the strength of the host ties that the sojourners establish and the proportion of interpersonal relationship that the sojourners maintain between the host and their own ethnic group (ibid.). In line with what Zhang (1998) reveals about limited contact that the overseas Chinese students had with their Amercian counterparts, the Mainland students in the present study had a very limited connection with their host. Although they encountered their first host group, the Baptist counterparts, regularly around 15 to 18 hours a week in class, most of them did not generate substantial and authentic host ties. They may have had more acquaintance with the 15 to 20 Baptist counterparts who attended the same tutorial groups, but most of them could scarcely name one or two closer friends among the host group except for Yang Jing (ML), the only Cantonese speaker in the group. Other than the Baptist classmates, the second group of host ties available to the Tsing Hua informants was their local hostel roommates (two in a room). Sharing the same room and experiencing life together, some Tsing Hua informants did establish a closer interpersonal relationship with their host roommates, most of them, however, failed mainly for the following two

reasons. For one thing, the arrangement of pairing up the roommates took place once every semester and most of the Tsing Hua informants had the same host roommates for only one semester; for another, some could not see eye to eye on the living habits that their host roommates practiced. As Liang Ming (ML) observed, very often his local roommate was either out or slept or hooked to the computer when he stayed in the hostel. He could stay up and play on the computer and got up pretty late the next morning. This different practice of daily activities again left them pretty little interpersonal communication. The third kind of relatively few and distant host ties was the Tsing Hua informants' host teachers, a few University staff and their RA (resident assistant) who stationed in their hostel. These University staff have respectively played different roles to be the source of both academic and non-academic information and emotional support especially during the initial phase of their journey in Hong Kong. Among those the administrative staff who was responsible for their student affairs made special efforts to give them emotional support by offering them some social gatherings whenever there were festivals in Hong Kong, and they thus became closer to them. The subject teachers were most informative academically, but not the favourite host group for the Tsing Hua informants to turn to since they somehow felt intimidated by their authority and power. To wrap up the discussion in this aspect, it is found that, though the Tsing Hua informants have reached a certain range of host relational network, they did not seem to have explored or maintained a deeper interpersonal relationship with the host group except for one or two of them. In Kim's words, the strength of their host tie was rather weak (Kim, 1988). This stranger-host relationship among most Tsing Hua students, thus, could not be transformed from what Tajfel and Turner (1979) called 'intergroup' relationship to interpersonal relationship.

Conversely, the Tsing Hua students' have established a closer tie with their Mainland peers on campus, which added more difficulty to their intercultural communication with their host group, similar to what were found in many studies on overseas Chinese students. This group mainly consisted of the Tsing Hua group, other Mainland students and researchers on campus, and few of their relatives living in areas close to Hong Kong. Different from many individual overseas Chinese students, these Tsing Hua students came as a group after their one semester's preparatory courses and training together in Beijing. During that critical initial period of being away from their original regions, they developed more private, interpersonal, and closer relationship, as Yang Jing (ML) disclosed. That explains why the first immediate group most of them usually turned to was their own group from the same cohort. After settling in different majors the second semester after they came to the University, naturally they were further divided into different sub-groups according to the major they chose and became closer with those in their sub-group.

The second ethnic group closer to the Tsing Hua informants was the Mainland graduate students and researchers on campus. With the prior experience from their substantial years of staying in Hong Kong and studying on the same campus especially in those Science faculties that most Tsing Hua informants chose, these on-campus Mainland Chinese group became the best and most accessible source for them to seek relevant, up-to-date, and essential information. Besides, the Union for these Mainland Chinese students on campus further tied them together and provided them the channel to seek emotional and informative help through which they developed close interpersonal relationship and communication. Their more frequent gatherings, playing ball games together, visiting each other's hometown and even

going back to Mainland together during holidays, can evidence this. The third Mainland Chinese tie for three of the Tsing Hua informants was their family, and relatives in Hong Kong or in Zhengshan, a Chinese special economic zone close to Hong Kong. These family or relative ties naturally provided them with more considerable practical help and channels to seek emotional comfort especially during the holidays when the hostel was not available to them.

To sum up, except for two to three of them who were actively and frequently involved in the local extra-curricular activities with their host counterparts, the rest mainly confined their relational networks among their ethnic group respectively from the original Tsing Hua group introduced by the scheme, and the Mainland scholars and graduate students on campus. The relational network with the ethnic tie appeared narrower, but deeper. This stronger ethnic tie that the Tsing Hua informants have possessed has, in a way, interfered with the progress of their ties with the host counterparts.

8.1.3.4 The hosts' intercultural communication with the sojourners and intra-cultural communication with the local peers

Compared with their Mainland counterparts, the Hong Kong group had less complicated, but a larger relational network. Their local circle encompasses their current classmates and friends at the University, their previous friends from schools and other sectors, families, and relatives. Growing up in the same place and embedded within similar culture, many of them have established profound and close interpersonal relationships with a certain number of their local peers, contrasting to the short and superficial contact with their Mainland counterparts. To the Hong Kong students, both the international students on campus and their Mainland counterparts were regarded as 'outsiders', as suggested by Matthew (HK). Along the

same line, Amanda (HK) found her Tsing Hua counterparts related better to their international counterparts than to their Hong Kong counterparts. This identification of in-groups as "groups of people about whose welfare [we are] concerned, with whom [we are] willing to cooperate without demanding equitable returns, and separation from whom leads to discomfort or even pain" (Triandis *et. al.*, 1988a:75) and otherwise as out-groups was recognized as two imperative concepts, *chi gei an* ('insider' in Cantonese) and *oi an* ('outsider' in Cantonese), in Chinese cultures (Gao, Ting-Toomey and Gudykunst, 1996). The in-groups and out-groups communication stemmed from this distinction of group identity and resulted in more in-group interactions, and fewer out-group interactions among the Hong Kong students. This finding was consistent with what Wheeler, Reis, and Bond (1989) found in comparison the Hong Kong students with North American students in their study.

Summary

To sum up, a modified communication model for the particular context of the present study has been developed and presented in the above chapter, in which both the intercultural and intra-cultural communication dimensions were found evenly essential for developing a fruitful intercultural communication and relationship. To trace back the formation of these two layers of communication, it was found that the unsatisfactory intercultural communication and relationship between the host and the sojourning group in the present study can be attributed to a chain of interactive and interwoven factors ingrained in the informants' mind long before their physical encounters took place. With their cognitive identification of themselves and others, they have formed perceived cultural and personal difference between them. This formation of group identity has directly governed the way they communicated with

their in-group and out-group counterparts. They thus tended to fall short of cognitive and behavioural flexibility to accommodate the different cultural behaviour of their out-group counterparts. For the Mainland sojourners in the present study, their different identity and clear goal of pursuing knowledge solely in this journey were found the major blocking stones which accounted for their inflexibility, while for their Hong Kong host, their strong in-group and out-group identification and some students' self-identification of being a weaker academic group also brought their intercultural communication and relationship to a standstill. Lacking substantial motivation and some cultural knowledge of the other group, both groups showed a lack of adaptive skills. In this regard, what was found common across both groups were the lack of mindfulness and experience in dealing with intercultural differences and conflict. Both groups chose not to confront the problems openly, leaving more confusion and doubt in their communication. The last factor that appeared equally damaging especially to the Hong Kong students' orientation of developing academic exchange and competition was the 'pull back' effect of their own peer group. With their peers' influence, they soon turned to their old ways of studying. For the sojourning group, the emotional support and physical availability of their in-group also discouraged them from reaching out their host group. Without the sojourners' initial lack of motivation to mix with their host group and the host groups' anxiety to approach them due to their self-identification and inexperience when confronting intercultural communication, both groups tended to create fewer chances for communication, which in return worsened their intercultural knowledge and skills they needed. The perceived cross-cultural incompetence further reinforced the feeling of their distance. Though the social environment appeared supportive, the outcome of each encounter varied owing to individual difference and their readiness to accept each other. This finding lends support to Ward and Kennedy's (1993)

claim about the group difference in adjustment outcomes. This complex communication circle ultimately limited both the quantity and the quality of their academic exchange and jeopardized the development of a healthy competition between them.

8.2 Understanding the Findings from a Contextual Learning Perspective

The above discussion on the core structure of the intercultural communication between the two groups not only reveals us how the inadequate adjustment of the two groups has hindered the scheme from reaching its three expected goals, but also serves as a basis for us to understand what was noted in the participants' classroom learning. This section will lastly turn to the particular learning milieu of the present study in an attempt to explain the findings from a micro perspective as Bateson (1978:15) stresses, "Without context, words and actions have no meaning at all," and it is through the contextual information that one obtains "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973). This section attempts to comprehend the findings by examining how the students' thoughts of the combined self, other, and situation influenced the communicative behaviour of the local students and their Mainland counterparts from a group in-class perspective.

Many studies found that other than the culturally embedded learning habits, attitudes, abilities, and personality, students are also highly affected by the learning circumstance they are situated in (Biggs, 1987; Gow & Kember, 1990; Kember & Gow, 1989). These learning circumstances can be generally categorized into cooperative, competitive, and individualistic learning according to the learning modes (Johnson & Johnson, 1991) and the values they support (Winter, 1995), among which cooperative and competitive learning were more widely reported in the

present findings in Chapter 4 and these two classroom learning approaches were to

contribute to a major part of interaction and communication between the two groups.

Discussion of this section will centre on what have encumbered the cooperative

learning and the competitive learning from developing more desired academic

exchange and constructive competition.

8.2.1 Cooperative learning

As demonstrated in the findings mainly in Chapter 4, unsuccessful cooperative group

work appeared quite recurrent and their effects striking. A typical account of this

type is the group problem-solving activities given by Amanda (HK) and Henry (HK)

in Chapter 4.1.3., in which the exchange of ideas was resulted in one way instead of

two ways, and the group discussion dominated by Li Feng (ML) in Observation 1 as

displayed in Chapter 4.1.4.2. What these group productions have failed to achieve is

to "make each member a stronger individual" (Johnson & Johnson, 1991:58) and to

make the most of one's own learning (Porter, 1996).

8.2.1.1 Lack of collaborative effort and interdependence

Simply having some members of the two groups sit side by side and work on a group

task does not necessarily spark rich intellectual discussion and strengthen each

member's intellectual ability if the group tasks are not proceeded with proper

positive interdependence, face-to-face encouraging interaction, individual

accountability and personal responsibility, interpersonal and small group skills, and

group processing (Johnson & Johnson, 1991). The essence of all these five

components lies in the assurance of an effective social interdependence in our human

interactions, which requires all cognitive, affective, language and social skills that

the members in the examples lacked. A close look at the cases against the five

criteria just mentioned shows that although members of both sides met with some difficulties in expressing themselves accurately to promote interactive discourse, the more revealing problems lie in the absence of interdependence, individual accountability, interpersonal social competence, and most of all, practically collaborative process. This was when their academic gap came into place. In the case reported by Amanda (HK) and Henry (ML), having tried very hard with their local peers but failed to solve the Mathematic problems, they turned to their Tsing Hua group member who would do it right away all by themselves and have the local peers turn in the work. They have not actually become positive interdependent, striving to group all the member's efforts and accomplish the tasks together. As Amanda (HK) said, "I felt they did it all." Closely related to this was the failure of taking each individual's accountability and personal responsibility seriously. Having a time limit to finish the task in class, the local students were too fearful to spend extra time to get down to understand who needs more help and support, and ensure that everyone takes their own parts, as Henry (HK) explained. They had to "hitchhike" on the work of their Tsing Hua counterparts (Johnson & Johnson, 1991:57). With just enough time to finish their tasks in time, they obviously did not go through a group processing which helps them to reflect on how well they have cooperated and what they can improve in the coming similar work that reinforce their future cooperation. Similar problems were found in another account given by other Tsing Hua informants like Li Qian (ML) who reported that throughout the whole semester his local partner constantly withdrew from participating into the in-class pair work that they were supposed to do together.

8.2.1.2 Lack of skills of managing differences

Other than the failure of achieving interdependence, individual accountability,

interpersonal social competence mentioned above, what was also found problematic is the lack of managing skills for settling differences as indicated by the case with Li Feng (ML) and his members' case. Being able to form the team, work together, solve the problems as a group did facilitate the group discussion to a certain point, but did not sustain it when Li and his local group members fail to manage their different views, one of the four specific cooperative communicative skills essential for processing effective group work articulated by Hill and Hill (1990). Being impatient with the Tsing Hua counterparts' rather dominant and forceful discussion, one local member resolved the conflicts destructively by turning the discussion into Cantonese and discussed with the local peers, which practically ended the Tsing Hua members' participation immediately. On the top of the incompetence of social skills mentioned above is the inadequate 'cohesiveness' and understanding of the 'norms' that form the social climate of a classroom peer group (Schmuck, 1971). Though the students in both cases felt comfortable about working together, they did not produce fruitful exchanges due to their short of "shared attitudes about objects and behaviors …" (ibid.:205).

The failure of accomplishing prolific academic exchanges in the above cases did not seem a great loss at the end, what emerged more destructive was the hindering of their intercultural relationship which may direct their future behaviour. Tthese students' relationship with their peers that are often neglected in education can greatly affect students' behaviour patterns, attitudes, and values in association with social relationship, education and life in a broad sense (Johnson, 1981). What added to the concern in these intercultural and inter-level classroom settings were the perceptions that may be formed based on these incidents based on which the local students may shape their future action and attitudes toward their Mainland

counterparts.

8.2.2 Competitive learning

Given the influence of a more competitive learning environment formed by the Mainland students in class, the policy expects that the local students' motivation will be boosted and sustained in the classroom learning. Johnson and Johnson (1991), however, argue that whether competitions bring out constructive results highly depends on whether the right conditions of competition are properly identified at the operational level, and a cooperative context is established in this competitive situation. It is the lack of this cooperative mechanism that led some classroom competitions to a failure after the presence of the Mainland students.

8.2.2.1 Lack of cooperative mechanism

Similar to the cases of cooperative learning described above, the unsatisfactory results of the competition development among the Hong Kong students and their Mainland counterparts shown in the findings reveal a lack of collective base. As noticed in the accounts given by Amy (HK) in Chapter 4.2.1, Katherine (HK) in Chapter 4.2.3, and Chapter 5.2.2.1 1 in which students' class participation was encouraged by receiving certain percent of scores for sharing their opinions or solving problematic tasks in some tutorial lessons, some Mainland students continuously tended to be much more active than their local counterparts in class, taking over some more intimidating students' chances to gain their scores. The system failed to encourage the competition to be done in clusters of students which maximized the number of winners, failed to monitor the process to ensure that each member has an equal chance (since some Mainland students tended to have extended sharing), and most important, failed to convince that it is unimportant to win or lose.

Since the scores they earned contributed to part of their final assessment results, most became very anxious about whether they win or lose. On the one hand, they saw the importance of winning; on the other hand, they perceived the chance of losing since there existed a large gap of academic performance between them and their Mainland counterparts. It is between this struggle that some destructive coping attitudes and behaviour emerged among some local students as revealed in the findings in Chapter 4.2.3. The destructive coping attitudes and behaviour include an unfavourable feeling toward those persistent winners which parallels what Blanchard, Adelman, and Cook (1975) found, the temptation to give up or avoid failure by some students who saw very slim chance to win and in Atkinson's (1965) words, the tendency to become non-achievement oriented. In this case, the competition turned into interpersonal competition rather than intergroup competition and caused interpersonal conflict. That is why DeRoche (1971) points out the cognitive consideration when arranging classroom competition. He finds classroom competition more beneficial to the high-achievers, while not as much for low-achievers as it may intensify the lower academic self-esteem among the weaker students (ibid.).

Having said that, not every in-class competition was found to have the problems mentioned. Findings from Observation 2 support that some other in-class group competitions resulted in fruitful and productive outcomes with effective intragroup cooperation joined by both the local students and their Mainland counterparts who did win at the end, and the whole group earned the reward and enjoyed being praised. This scene of jumping for the joy of winning with cooperative efforts could definitely be seen more in other classes if each classroom competition could be planned more carefully with the foremost consideration of fully involving the

cooperative and collaborative efforts instead of either individuals. As Atkinson and Raynor's (1974:xi) tell us, "achievement is a we thing, not a me thing, ..." The failure of using appropriate competitive learning will not provoke motivation, but kill it.

Summary

To conclude, the above discussion has shed special light on the discussion of the underlying factors that hindered the development of academic exchange and competition between the local Hong Kong students and their Mainland counterparts within the learning framework in the students' everyday classroom. The class cooperative tasks have on the one hand, contributed to a relatively larger academic exchanges between the two groups, on the other hand, magnified the large academic gap between the two groups and stirred some negative classroom climate among the students. The major problems lie in the difficulties of practicing cooperative work with both the low achievers and the high achievers in one small group. Without proper arrangement and inadequate explicit endorsement of cooperation and collaboration from the teachers, the high achievers ended up doing all the work, while the low achievers were feeling like losers.

Similar problems of inadequate cooperative practice were found in the students' competitive learning in which it turned into interpersonal competition rather than intergroup competition. The cooperative and competitive work at the end drew them away from each other than closer to each other, which in return hampered their future communication and relationship, and thwarted them from having more academic exchange and competition. With an attempt of using the Mainland students' modeling as a social motivation (Biggs, 1995), the policy has yet neglected the

importance of another social motivation, the peer acceptance and recognition that enhances the self-esteem constructs for the weaker Hong Kong students in the present study. Bearing in mind that the policy for bringing Mainland students to Hong Kong was to increase competition and achievement, our conclusions suggest that this is far too simple a view, that competition can be destructive as well as constructive and that the policy needs to be much more subtle and differentiated.

CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Conclusions and Implications

With the participants' extensive accounts and collective stories given in Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6, the present study has displayed a comprehensive picture of the initial upshot of the introduction of Mainland Chinese students into the undergraduate programmes in one of the universities in Hong Kong. Responding to the three research questions set in Chapter 1.2, the summary of findings given in Chapter 7 has highlighted the preliminary and rather unsatisfactory outcomes of the scheme due to the restricted interaction and intercultural communication between them apparently caused by two major difficulties in the academic and cultural adjustment of the two groups. Discussion in Chapter 6, however, further suggests that what lies behind these academic and cultural differences are their lack of experience of handling intercultural communication, their different perception of motive for studying and living, and most important, their strong and diverse self-conception in relation to others. Based on these findings and discussion results, this chapter will summarize the study by outlining the implications of the study and its findings, followed by the recommendations for improving the scheme and for further research.

Six major implications can be drawn from the study and its findings as follows:

1) Regarding the methodological strategies applied, the present study has proved the significance of examining the host students' reaction and attitudes toward their sojourning counterparts when discovering the sojourners' adjustment experience, as pointed out by Furnham and Bochner early in 1986. With the wide-ranging accounts presented not only by the sojourners, but also by their hosts, the study has attained more plausible and comprehensive results to unearth the inner

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structure of the intercultural interpersonal communication and relationship among students of the two parties that show more diverse perspectives when looking at the issue, and enriched the relatively inadequate work done with the other approaches in this field which tend to focus only on the 'strangers'.

2) Concerning the effects of the scheme, the findings indicate that the introduction of the excellent Mainland students into the universities in Hong Kong could possibly bring a positive encouragement to their Hong Kong counterparts as well as a negative competition to others with lower self-esteem, lower self-efficacy, and poor academic performance. Closely related to this point is the extra careful consideration and proper arrangements needed to be taken when introducing competition from an external circle in classroom learning within different contexts with different kinds of students. Bringing the Mainland students to university campus alone is far from enough. To boost the Hong Kong students' motivation and competitiveness in their learning, measures and programmes that help the Hong Kong students to adjust to this competitive learning environment are needed.

3) From the cultural adjustment perspective, what appeared more an issue in this particular case was the counter adjustment of the Hong Kong counterparts. Studying with this unexpected first group of Mainland undergraduate students coming from a high-sounding status, the local counterparts demonstrated their initial excitement, welcoming, curiosity, and surprise, but some followed by certain anticlimax afterwards as they faced each other in their everyday class; just like what was experienced by their Mainland counterparts. Without the assistance of an intermediary to overcome the inherent difficulties recapitulated

in Chapter 8, most members of both groups by and large remained socially distant from each other at the final stage of the present study (two years after the study was begun).

4) What immediately relates to the outcomes of the Hong Kong students' adjustment is their intercultural communication competence. In this case, other than the commonly recognized language barrier and cultural diversity, the results identify the very limited frame of reference that many first year Hong Kong students have in regard to Mainland Chinese, which leads to overgeneralization and misperception of their Mainland counterparts. This has to be cleared since the host students often adopt different strategies based on this framework for their present and future interactions with their Mainland counterparts. Among the misconceptions of the presence of the Mainland sojourners, the hosts' perceived socioeconomic competition between the two places has caused some tension among the two groups' interpersonal communication, which is worth noting. What should also be concerned is the significant influence of peer culture on the local students' attitudes within a collegiate environment, as evidenced by the findings; and a predominantly Hong Kong peer culture is likely to contribute to an unsupportive collegiate environment of students from other places.

5) Other than the intercultural communication competence, what appeared subtly but significantly important from the study is the inadequate training of social competence for tertiary students especially during their transition to college when facing many changes and challenges. This was greatly manifested by the rather deficient social competence among the Year 1 students of both the Mainland group and their Hong Kong counterparts when dealing with differences and

competitive situations, which indicates too often, major attention has been given to individual's academic achievement from education reformers, as implied by the present Policy. Relatively less concern has been drawn to the social development of these students, which has jeopardized the success of the present scheme and their social relationship as a whole. As the 21st century marks a patent and rapid move towards globalization, the needs of acquiring effective social skills has become ever pressing to avoid conflicts within and between cultures.

6) Lastly, what can also be suggested by the above implications is that the intercultural and interpersonal communication among the different groups in the same ethnic group, Hong Kong Chinese and Mainland Chinese in this case, remained restricted and at times problematic. In the collegiate environment, this communication gap has largely hindered the building and maintaining of healthy and fruitful intercultural peer relationships, which prove to be crucial to academic exchange and competition among students of the same ethnic group.

In a word, the findings from this study must be understood in relation to the limitations of a particular methodology, a relatively small number of participants, and most important, a specific time schedule. Examining the communication and relationship of the two particular groups during a rather sensitive period of time when more people in Hong Kong turned their eyes to North and the policy of admitting Mainland professionals and allowing their Mainland counterparts to stay and work in Hong Kong came into sight, the present study may have maximized the negative feeling of the local students towards their out-group. While the two groups were found harmonious, we cannot deny the covered feelings of protecting the in-

group and resisting the out-group expressed by some local students. Under the prevailing admiration of the Mainland students in the press (*Ming Pao*, 20 December 2000) and the confrontation of the threat of losing a better grade in class and a place in work market, the local students were found intimidated, and at times vulnerable.

Having said that, the study has maintained the individual voices and diverse perspectives. Hearing voices from both the hosts' and the sojourners' sides with the amalgamation of the use of ethnographic interview, non-participant observation, and participant observation, the study has understood a particular social milieu through the eyes of its participants from which significant meanings were drawn. It has, on the one hand, unraveled the intricacy and delicacy of the intercultural communication and relationship together with the effects of intra-cultural communication, and on the other hand, presented the significance of the exploration of its entity. By studying the sojourners as it was originally planned, I turned out to learn more about the home students by including their voices. Retrospectively, I found the entire process a difficult, but enjoyable one. Confusion, mess, and frustration were definitely there throughout the process of the present study especially during the process of negotiating access, but fortunately not those only as the study stirred a course of human interaction and interests. All the network set-up, negotiation of access, direct observation, face-to-face interviewing and elicitation, social gatherings and daily conversing have considerably expanded and strengthened my workplace relations, and most important, personal friendship. Through all these I personally experienced the blockage of our mindset derived from our self-identity in communication, and witnessed the significance of culture in our communication and conversely, communication in our culture.

9.2 Recommendations

A number of recommendations for improving the present situation and for further research may be drawn from this study. These are classified and framed within the substantive findings of the study regarding three main facets: classroom teaching and learning, academic exchanges and students' communication and relationship, and the development of the present study on intercultural communication in similar context as the present one.

9.2.1 Classroom learning and teaching

1) Since both the host students and their sojourning counterparts have experienced adjustment problems in the learning context in different perspectives to a different extent, appropriate and corresponding administrative policies and class arrangement should be adopted to help the sojourners and their Hong Kong counterparts to better adjust to the different learning and cultural environment. For example, a sensible and clear language policy is needed to meet the expectation and needs of the students of both groups, and most of all, to be put into practice by all who agreed to avoid the conflict of classroom teaching and learning due to the problem of the use of language.

2) Teachers with classes containing students from multiethnic and multilevel groups can organize sharing sessions to discuss the proper arrangement of the tasks used, the combination of the grouping, the classroom setting, and most important, the explicit encouragement of cooperative learning in class and in particular the mutual assistance of the students from the two parties when using competitive learning.

3) Being in classes with multilevel groups, students of different levels should be assigned to take turns to perform different roles so as to create more opportunities for positive interdependence. With some weaker students in the present study, more encouragement should be given to enhance their self-esteem and motivation to learn from their Mainland peers. Students' interpersonal manner and cooperative skills should be observed to assure constructive participation. All the ideas just mentioned draw us back to the goal of cooperation and competition; that is to strengthen each individual who participates.

9.2.2 Academic exchanges and students' communication and relationship

1) The classroom interaction did not seem to have functioned as an effective channel to arouse substantial academic exchanges between students of the two groups due to the rushed class schedule and limited intellectual interaction, whereas the after class academic activities or organizations proved to be more essential and helpful for providing extra opportunities. To strength the intellectual exchanges between the two groups, other than improving the classroom learning and teaching, focus should be given and more work should be done to encourage the students to join the after class academic groups.

2) To eradicate the social gap and establish successful intercultural relationship, communication is the key. In this regard, the institutions can play a much more active role. They can organize more social and informal activities like international festivals involving students of both groups to help both groups to understand and accept each other. A stable and supportive group formed by members of both groups to reach out to students of both groups on campus may also be a sound idea. Peer programmes or small group tutorials can be carried

out to pair up the Mainland students and their host counterparts to help the sojourning students to adjust socially as well as to generate substantial academic assistance and exchange which ultimately will bring them with more interaction, communication, and most essential, a meaningful relationship.

3) At the same time, the institutions must attempt to heighten the Hong Kong students' appreciation of people from diverse cultures by spreading the message through university professionals and departmental or institutional activities. Intentional and constant effort should be made to create positive social interactions between the Hong Kong students and their counterparts of other ethnic groups. Along similar lines, students facing difficulties regarding the intercultural and inter-level learning should be encouraged to confront and voice their difference and express their reaction in order to achieve a trustworthier collegiate environment. A channel should be set up for them to seek opinion and guidance.

9.2.3 For further research

The study has explored broadly and primarily the initial outcomes of the Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong Chinese students being together. Further studies can be conducted to supplement or improve its scale based, length covered, and subjects discussed.

1) Since the present study was based on a rather small scale of informants involving only the Mainland student sojourners and their Hong Kong counterparts, further researches are needed to examine the issue with a larger and more wide-ranging sample group for other subjects that might emerge.

2) Continuous researches that extend the length of the study are desirable to investigate the adjustment change and process of both the Mainland and the Hong Kong groups in a longitude scale and in what ways their adjustment relates other variables like gender or the length of residency.

3) Following up the findings in the present study, more specific investigations are called for to explore more systematically, for example, the in-class language difficulties faced by both the Mainland and the Hong Kong groups, and the need of counseling service for both groups.

4) Most important, researches with concerns for the intercultural communication and relationship between not only the Mainland and the Hong Kong Chinese students across different campuses, but also among the different ethnic groups on campus should be explored along with the advocacy of having a multiethnic and multicultural university campus in Hong Kong as suggested in Policy Address 1997.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1:

A Communication Model of Cross-cultural Adaptation by Kim (1988:79)

Appendix 2:

Excerpts of Interview Scripts

Appendix 3:

The First Round of Class Observation – Mainland students

Appendix 4:

The Second Round of Class Observation – Mainland students and Hong Kong students

Appendix 5:

A Model of Intercultural Communication between the Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong Chinese Students

Appendix 1: Kim's Communication Model (1988)

Adaptive Predisposition

Culture/Racial Background
Open/Resilient Personality
Preparedness for Change

Host Environmental Conditions

Receptivity
Conformity Pressure

Adaptive Outcome

Functional Fitness
Psychological Health
Intercultural Identity

Ethnic IC

Ethnic MC

Host
Communication
Competence

Host IC

Host MC

Personal Communication

Social
Communication

Note: IC-Interpersonal Communication, MC-Mass Communication
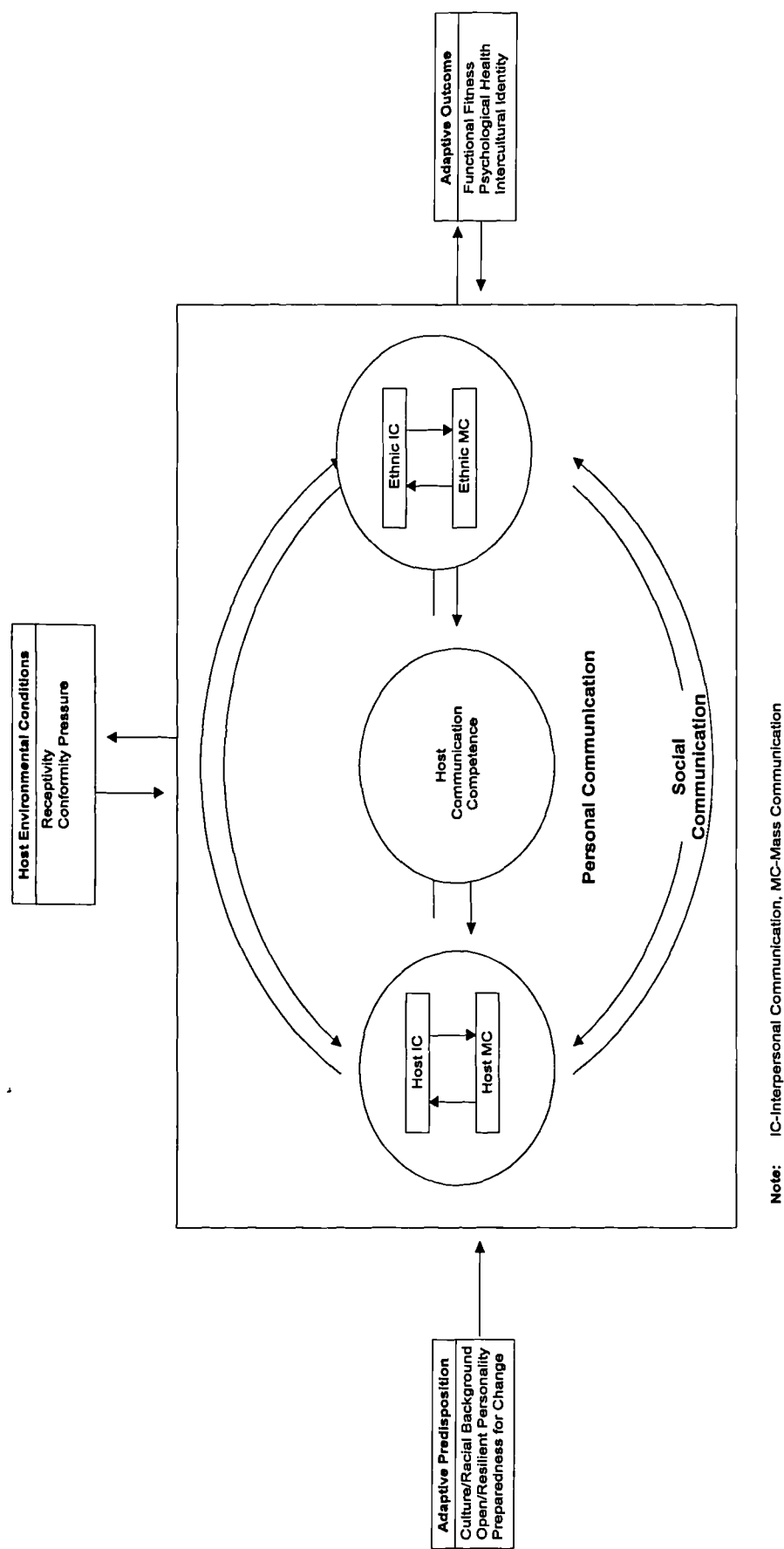
Figure 1: A Communication Model of Cross-cultural Adaptation

Appendix 2: Excerpts of Interview Scripts

Excerpt 1: Interview with Tsing Hua Students on Their Adjustment

No. of interview:	7	Date:	27 January 2000
Interviewer:	The researcher	Time:	3:30 – 4:35 PM
Interviewee:	Tang Ziyong (ML)	Length:	1 hour and 20 minutes
Sex:	M	Place:	Office

1. Interviewer : Have you got any ideas about how studying in Hong Kong was like before you came to Hong Kong?

2. Tang Ziyong : No, no ideas.

3. Interviewer : After you came, how do you feel about studying in Hong Kong?

4. Tang Ziyong : Pretty good. The learning facilities are better, but the environment makes people become lazy easily.

5. Interviewer : Maybe everybody say so.

6. Tang Ziyong : Yes, because they're telling the truth.

7. Interviewer : What do you mean by the better learning facilities. For example, the computers run faster?

8. Tang Ziyong : Yes.

9. Interviewer : Then, what do you about the local students?

10. Tang Ziyong : Pretty good, they are pretty warm to us. 'Warm' toward us is my first impression. The other impression is ...

11. Interviewer : What about the learning aspect?

12. Tang Ziyong : It seems that they are always busy with their studies from day till night, but it's hard to tell the results.

13. Interviewer : Ha-ha, seems that they are always busy with their studies.

14. Tang Ziyong : Yes, I find that they are not very relaxing, pretty busy actually. But, it seems that their academic results are not very good.

15. Interviewer : O. K. How did you get along with them?

16. Tang Ziyong : Pretty good, we get along very well, very harmonious.

17. Interviewer : Do you have language barrier?

18. Tang Ziyong : Yes, oh, no.

19. Interviewer : You speak Cantonese?

20. Tang Ziyong : Actually, we used all three languages (Cantonese, Putonghua, and English). In order to communicate, we tried every way to do so.

21. Interviewer : Do they know how to speak Putonghua?

22. Tang Ziyong : They know a little bit. At the beginning, they would follow us and spoke in Putonghua. But, now basically we follow them to speak in Cantonese.

23. Interviewer : What about English?

24. Tang Ziyong : Yeah, some of them used to speak in English with us when they met us. But, now it's less often.

25. Interviewer : Because they're afraid of ...

26. Tang Ziyong : Yes, they were afraid that we couldn't understand them. But, now they understand that we can understand all Cantonese.

27. Interviewer : At the beginning, could they recognise that you were not local student?

28. Tang Ziyong : I think they could recognise us as Mainland students.

29. Interviewer : Would they take the initiative to talk to you or ask you things about school work?

30. Tang Ziyong : Yes, they would. They were very active, asking us about assignments. They were more keen on assignments than on us.

31. Interviewer : They asked you about assignments because they didn't know how to do it?

32. Tang Ziyong : Anyway, it's always because they don't know how to do it. Also, they'll always ask you for your assignment as an example and refer to it when they do it. Yeah, always.

Excerpt 2: Interview with Baptist Students on Their Adjustment

No. of interview:	9	Date:	April 11, 2000
Interviewer:	The researcher	Time:	11:15 – 12:30 PM
Interviewee:	Paul (HK)	Length:	1 hour and 15 minutes
Sex:	M	Place:	Office

1. Interviewer : What is your first impression of your Tsing Hua classmate?

2. Paul : Mm...I feel they are very ... they put a lot of time in their studies. They put a lot of effort into their study; having not many extra-curricular activities ...I feel they seem to be incompatible with us.

3. Interviewer : Why? How could you tell that you're not compatible?

4. Paul : Mm... Actually, I like meeting friends, but for one thing, the language. At first, they couldn't speak [Cantonese] well, now they're better gradually. Sometimes, maybe it's because of [our] different background ...the background in which we grew up, it's hard to communicate with each other...feel kind of incompatible.

5. Interviewer : So, how did you try to talk to him?

6. Paul : That time, I ...

7. Interviewer : Was it a discussion on your assignment or simply casual chatting?

8. Paul : Casual chatting, asking him ...like 'you are from Tsing Hua? How do you like Hong Kong?' Things that were very trivial, only one or two sentences, won't be long or detailed.

9. Interviewer : What do you think is the major barrier, the language or the background?

10. Paul : I think ...um...it's the background. Maybe their goals are different from mine. Their goal is to do a good job in the examination, so they don't have many social activities. They are not very willing to put so much time to have contact with us. What I found out is that even when they eat [at lunch time], they seldom joined us, they wouldn't take the initiative. Sometimes we have some [off-campus] activities, I remember they joined us once to have barbecue. After that, they haven't joined us any more. [We] simply hardly see them ...

11. Interviewer : What about in the class? Did you have the tutorial with him?

12. Paul : Yes.

13. Interviewer : Yes?

14. Paul : Sometimes, lecture.

15. Interviewer : So, how is he like in class? Would he take the initiative to sit together with

the classmates?

16. Paul	:	He usually sitst by himself. I find that he is very attentive, while we are more ...
17. Interviewer	:	So, you haven't really had a chance to talk to him or discuss about your study together?
18. Paul	:	No, I haven't.
19. Interviewer	:	I see.
20. Paul	:	I will greet him and say a little bit when I see him, but ...
21. Interviewer	:	So, have you seen other students talking to him about assignment or things related to studies?
22. Paul	:	I've seen [them] talking about assignment, but won't be much. Usually, they (the local classmates) would ask him whether he has finished [the assignment], whether he knows how to do it, very simple. I haven't seen them really discussed ...unless they are both doing the same laboratory work ...

Appendix 3: The First Round of Class Observation

No. of Observation	Observation A	Observation B	Observation C
Date	28-Apr-99	30-Apr-99	3-May-99
Time	10:30 -11:30 AM	11:30 -1:30 PM	5:30 -6:30 PM
Length	1 hour	2 hour	1 hour
Place	Classroom OEN W704	Classroom OEN M902	Classroom OEN E604
Course title	Mathematics	Oral English	Physics
Class size	11students	11students	11students
Language medium	English and some Putonghua	English	English
Country of teacher from	Mainland China	Australia	Mainland China
Class type	Tutorial	Tutorial	Lecture
Class objective	Problem solving	Practicing oral English with some written exercise	Introducing new theory
Tasks involved	In this lesson, the teacher started the lesson with a Mathematics problem, which aroused the students' involvement and discussion. Students were invited to work out the problem on the board on a volunteering basis. After the students finished, the teacher discussed their work together with them on the board.	This was a foundation English lesson in which students were given some exercises to work on their English grammar and practice of social oral English.	This is a more teacher-oriented lesson with the teacher introducing a theory to the students.
Scenes focused	The students' self-learning behaviour, their zeal for solving Mathematics problems and the constant back and forth discussion, argument, and negotiation between teacher and stduents, students and student	The challenge of a grammar point raised by some students to their native English-speaking teacher, and frequent query and imitation of the teacher's English	Some students' self-learning in class instead of listening to the teacher

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No. of Observation	Observation D	Observation E
Date	5-May-99	5-May-99
Time	10:30 -11:30 AM	5:30 -7:30 PM
Length	2 hour	2 hour
Place	Classroom OEN M902	SCE Building
Course title	Oral English	Understanding Hong Kong
Class size	11students	11students
Language medium	English	English
Country of teacher from	Australia	Hong Kong
Class type	Tutorial	Tutorial
Class objective	Practicing oral English	Class presentation
Tasks involved	This was another English lesson on social English. The teacher gave some lectures on topics like "how to interrupt politely," and showed some television programs. Students were then put into two teams to gather their ideas on a controversial issue appeared in the program. After their discussion, they had a debate with the other group who held opposite views.	In this lesson, students were to do their individual presentation one by one. The teacher gave his comments on the student performance and the views they held against some political issues that emerged in their presentation, which stirred up very heated discussion and argument.
Scenes focused	The active attitude of carrying on the discussion task promptly, requiring not only themselves to get involved, but also others who appeared quiet	The students' strong sense of nationality and social responsibility, and their constant and persistent questioning, discussing with the teacher and fellow classmates even after class during the dining time

Appendix 4: The Second Round of Class Observation

No. of Observation	Observation 1	Observation 2	Observation 3
Date	1-Nov-99	2-Nov-99	3-Nov-99
Time	1:30 - 2:30 PM	2:30 - 3:30 PM	12:30 - 1:30 PM
Length	1 hour	1 hour	1 hour
Place	Classroom at LMC	Classroom OEN E604	Classroom RL 2003
Course title	English for Science	English for Science	Economic
Class size	17students	19students	18students
Mainland students involved	Li Feng (ML)	Tang Ziyong (ML) & Zhou Wen (ML)	Yang Jing (ML)
Language medium	English	English	English
Country of teacher from	Hong Kong	Hong Kong	Hong Kong
Class type	Tutorial	Tutorial	Tutorial
Class objective	Practicing synthesising skills	Revision of some common English errors	Problem solving
Tasks involved	In this lesson, the task was to finish an outline based on the outcome of their discussion in small groups. They each first read a different article relating to the same topic. After jotting down the notes they found relevant to the topic, the students had to group their information they obtained and synthesizing into an outline with clear thesis statement, topic sentences, supporting details of each paragraph, and the conclusion.	The task was a group competition. Students in each group had to first proofread some English sentences with grammatical errors. After they finished, they had to send one person to write the revised answers on the board. The group that got the most answer right won the competition.	Students were invited to work out the tasks they were given previously on the board as they usually did in each tutorial lesson. If the students volunteered and solved the problems assigned, they would gain certain proportion of marks.
Scenes focused	The argument between Lin Feng and his local group mates	The productive academic exchange and collaborative work achieved by students of both sides	The attentiveness of the Mainland students and the hostile attitude of one of her local counterparts

No. of Observation	Observation 4	Observation 5	Observation 6
Date	1-Dec-99	1-Dec-99	7-Dec-99
Time	8:30 - 9:30 AM	11:30 - 12:30 PM	1:30 - 3:30 PM
Length	1 hour	1 hour	2 hour
Place	Classroom OEN M805	Classroom OEN M805	Classroom OEN M805
Course title	English for Science	English for Science	English for Science
Class size	15students	17students	19students
Mainland students involved	Li Qian (ML)	Gao Min (ML), Zheng Wenshan (ML), Liu Kun (ML)	Wen Jingshan (ML), Liang Ming (ML)
Language medium	English	English	English
Country of teacher from	Enlgand	England	Hong Kong
Class type	Tutorial	Tutorial	Tutorial
Class objective	Class revision for examination	Group discussion	Individual oral presentation
Tasks involved	This was an English revision lesson in which the teacher talked about what they had gone through in this course and what would be included in the coming examination. It was more teacher-oriented. But, the teacher always asked the students' questions and invited questions from the students.	Students were put into small groups and were asked to discuss some issues mentioned in the worksheet they were given and reported to the whole class afterwards.	This was a class presentation in which students were to present individually on the term paper they have written. Although the classroom learning mode was not an interactive one, students' class behaviour can be observed.
Scenes focused	The attention the Mainland students paid to the class and his initiative of asking questions in class	The academic exchange in small group discussion and the leading roles the Mainland students played in group discussion	The Mainland students' initiative of asking question before the end of the lesson

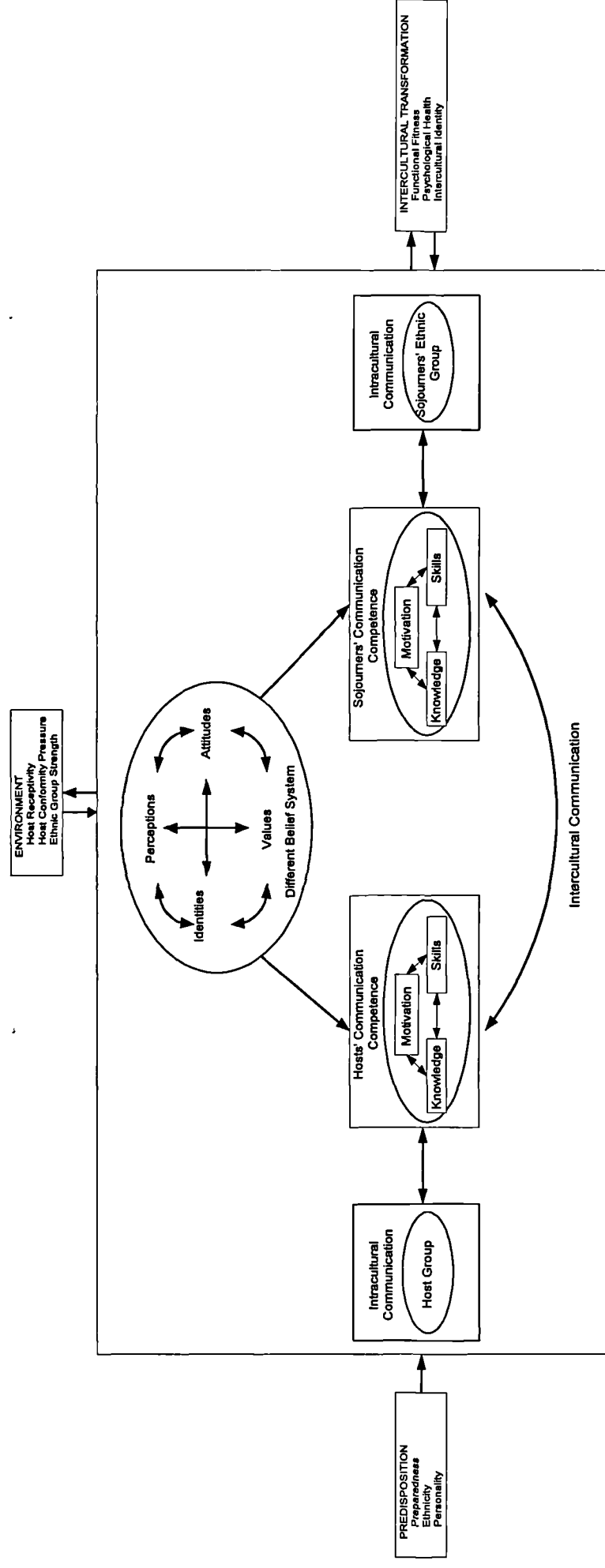# Appendix 5: A Modified Communication Model for the Present Study

Figure 2. A Model of Intercultural Communication Between The Mainland Chinese and The Hong Kong Chinese Students

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