ACADEMIC AND SOCIOCULTURAL ADJUSTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM ARABIC-PERSIAN CULTURES AND CONFUCIANIST HERITAGE CULTURES AT AN AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY

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Graduate School of Education

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THESIS DECLARATION

I, Michèle Doray certify that:

This thesis has been substantially accomplished during enrolment in the degree.

This thesis does not contain material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution.

No part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of The University of Western Australia and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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Date: 13th April 2017
International students (ISs) are a vital aspect of the Australian higher education industry. It is in the interest of both ISs and host institutions to optimise students’ academic success. In undertaking higher education at Australian universities, ISs are confronted with varied challenges, particularly in navigating the complexity of a different academic and social culture, and studying in a second language. Previous research has studied ISs mainly as homogenous groups and identified generic issues common to most cohorts of ISs. However, it is necessary to recognise that IS cohorts are not always similar and differentiations exist based on specific characteristics unique to individual IS groups. These characteristics are significant in the expectations ISs transfer into the host environment and the development of certain learning behaviours. Thus, a major purpose of this research was to explore and identify characteristics unique to specific IS cultural groups in transitioning from the home to the host academic and sociocultural environments.

This study explored the perceptions of ISs from Arabic-Persian Cultures (APC) and Confucianist Heritage Cultures (CHC) studying at a large Australian university. ISs’ experiences and perceptions of the host academic and sociocultural environment and the coping strategies they employed to manage, understand and construct meaning of the new environment were investigated in this study.

The study adopted a qualitative, interpretivist lens to explore ISs’ perceptions of their academic and sociocultural experiences. A collective case study research design was utilised involving two groups of ISs studying at one large public Australian university. Using maximum variation sampling, 17 participants were recruited from a range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses to provide a holistic understanding of the main issues faced by ISs across different courses and disciplines. Nine participants were from APC heritages: three from Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), three from Iraq and three from Iran. The remaining eight participants were from CHC heritages. Ten of the participants were female, with the remaining seven being male. Four were completing undergraduate degrees, nine were doing postgraduate coursework, and four were completing a Doctor of Philosophy. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, field notes and documents. Participants were interviewed twice over 12-17 months (2014-2015) to provide chronological perspectives of their experiences. The data was analysed through a process of open coding to develop the two thematic codes of academic environment and sociocultural environment.

Four propositions and eight sub-propositions were developed to explain participants’ adjustment to studying in a different culture. Within the academic environment theme, three propositions and six sub-propositions emerged. Proposition 1 focused on the value systems of participants home countries and Australia to provide insights into the wider political and sociocultural setting which has a direct influence on classroom interactions. Proposition 2 highlighted the challenges faced by participants in the host culture due to a mismatch in expectations as these expectations were derived from learning experiences in their home cultures. Proposition 3 explained participants’ adaptation strategies to cope with the challenges encountered in host cultures. Within the sociocultural theme, one proposition and two sub-
propositions emerged. Proposition 4 focused on participants’ responses to the sociocultural environment and identified the challenges faced and coping strategies developed.

Similarities were found in the experience of the academic environment for both groups of participants as APC and CHC participants adopted a transient identity to cope with the demands of the academic environment. In the sociocultural environment, both cohorts of participants appeared to retreat to their original cultural identities. Key differences between the two cohorts were apparent in the sociocultural context as APCs were restricted by age, religion and family responsibilities in building social relationships outside of their immediate communities, while CHCs built relationships with other ISs.

Findings from this study highlight the importance for international higher education providers to be aware of and sensitive to the influences and expectations that ISs bring with them into the host environment. These findings have implications for policy and practices related to the support of ISs and contribute new dimensions to the general literature on IS adjustment which views ISs as agentic individuals. Suggestions are also provided on how higher education institutions can better respond to the needs of a diverse community of learners.
“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then is not an act but a habit”. ~ Aristotle
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband and children, with whom I shared this incredible journey and whom had the patience and tolerance in putting up with the demands my research imposed on the family.

To my husband, Philip Doray, I am filled with immense gratitude for the many ways you encouraged me, picked me up and supported me throughout this journey. I am indeed blessed to have a husband who supports me in my endeavours, no matter how crazy they are as you stand next to me, assisting me in every conceivable way possible. Special thanks for being the ‘technical guru’ and translating my numerous, scrawny handwritten sketches into well-presented diagrams. Your pedantic nature was particularly useful in the formatting of this thesis. Your patience, support and undying love of me despite my ‘beastly’ nature especially towards the end were vital in preserving my sanity.

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Brandon, my only son, thanks for your patience and understanding of the pressures on my time, which left me with little patience or energy to assist you as much as I should have. Thanks for your encouragement and belief in me. A special thanks for assisting with the menial tasks of putting the appendix together. Your photographic and scanning skills were certainly very useful.

This thesis is also dedicated to my parents, Felix and Bernadette Doray, my first educators and the greatest champions of my academic pursuits. Mum and Dad, you have instilled in me a lifelong love for education and a thirst for knowledge. I am eternally grateful for the path you set me on from a young age and for your encouragement, belief and unwavering faith in me. It was always your dream for me to complete a doctoral thesis and I hope I have done you proud.

“It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop” ~ Confucius
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Despite the intrinsic solitary nature of a doctoral thesis journey, it is rarely the product of a single individual but the collective efforts of many. Without the love and support of a good many people, I could never have completed this monumental task.

First and foremost, I thank God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and Mother Mary for the many blessings showered on me and for giving me the strength and determination to persist with the doctoral studies.

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A big thanks to the gracious participants of this study who shared their personal stories with me. Your trust and confidence in my ability to give voice to your views is much appreciated. It has been my goal and passion to privilege the predominantly silenced voices of international students so your faith in my ability to do so is much appreciated.

To my brother and sister-in-law, Francois and Dewi Doray, thanks for your belief in me and your encouragement, support and prayers which helped me through many tough times.

To my brother-in-law, Bernard Doray, I am grateful for your faith in me and the immeasurable moral support you provided from across the oceans.

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“I have not failed 700 times. I have not failed once. I have succeeded in proving that those 700 ways will not work. When I have eliminated the ways that will not work, I will find the way that will work.” ~ Thomas Edison
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<tr>
<td>AAUCS</td>
<td>Australian-Asian Universities Cooperation Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>Affect, Behaviour, Cognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>AEI</td>
<td>Australian Education International</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIS</td>
<td>Arabic International Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>APC</td>
<td>Arabic Persian Cultures</td>
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<tr>
<td>APP</td>
<td>Academic Preparatory Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARIES</td>
<td>Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATN</td>
<td>Australian Technology Network of Universities</td>
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<tr>
<td>AUQA</td>
<td>Australian Universities Quality Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>AVCC</td>
<td>Australian Vice Chancellor Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHC</td>
<td>Confucianist Heritage Cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL</td>
<td>Chinese Learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CQAHE</td>
<td>Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRICOS</td>
<td>Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWA</td>
<td>Course Weighted Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAE</td>
<td>Deloitte Access Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIAC</td>
<td>Department of Immigration and Citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>English for Academic Purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL</td>
<td>English Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELICOS</td>
<td>English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELSHE</td>
<td>English Language Standards for Higher Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOS</td>
<td>Education Services for Overseas Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>HDR</td>
<td>Higher Degree by Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
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<td>HECS</td>
<td>Higher Education Contribution Scheme</td>
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<td>HK</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
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<td>IBM</td>
<td>International Business Machines</td>
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<td>ICEF</td>
<td>International Consultants for Education and Fairs</td>
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<td>IDP</td>
<td>International Development Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>IELTS</td>
<td>International English Language Testing System</td>
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<td>IS</td>
<td>International Student</td>
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<tr>
<td>KSA</td>
<td>Kingdom of Saudi Arabia</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCEETYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council on Education, Training and Youth Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>MODL</td>
<td>Migration Occupations in Demand List</td>
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<tr>
<td>NESB</td>
<td>Non-English Speaking Background</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<td>OIT</td>
<td>Organismic Integration Theory</td>
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<td>OSC</td>
<td>Overseas Student Charge</td>
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<td>OSO</td>
<td>Overseas Student Office</td>
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<td>OSTAL</td>
<td>Overseas Student Assurance Levy</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRC</td>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRISMS</td>
<td>Provider Registration International Management System</td>
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<td>QA</td>
<td>Quality Assurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDT</td>
<td>Self-Determined Theory / Self-Determination Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>SLA</td>
<td>Second Language Acquisition</td>
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<td>SRL</td>
<td>Self-Regulated Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWA</td>
<td>Semester Weighted Average</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEQSA</td>
<td>Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency</td>
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<td>TNE</td>
<td>TransNational Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
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<tr>
<td>UAI</td>
<td>Uncertainty Avoidance Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>UMAP</td>
<td>University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organisation</td>
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction
Contemporary Australian higher education (HE) is at a time of critical change and challenge. In particular, the rapid development of global HE has provided the stimulus for universities around the world to address the complexity of teaching and learning in multilingual environments, particularly in relation to students’ academic and sociocultural adjustments. An underlying assumption of adjustment is that it reflects an unequal relationship, imposing values on ISs to conform to the conventional practices of the host country. However, this study adopts a nuanced approach to adjustment and examines the decision-making processes of ISs as they navigate an unfamiliar academic and sociocultural environment. In particular, understanding key influences which assist or impede international students (ISs) performance at university is necessary given the current acceleration of internationalisation in the Australian HE sector. The aim of this research was to provide insights into the academic and sociocultural experiences and perceptions of ISs from Arabic-Persian Cultures (APCs) and Confucianist Heritage Cultures (CHCs) when studying at an Australian tertiary institution.

This chapter provides an introduction to the study. It starts with a description of key concepts and terms. The background and rationale of the study is then presented. This is followed by the research purpose and research questions, and the significance and originality of the research. The position of the researcher is then provided. Finally, the structure of the thesis is presented.

Description of Key Concepts and Terms
The following key concepts and terms relevant to this study will be described and defined in this section: globalisation, internationalisation, ISs, cross-cultural adaptation and adjustment, APCs and CHCs.

Globalisation
This study is situated within the overarching framework of globalisation and internationalisation. Detailed consideration of both terms and their relevance to HE is described in Chapter Two. Globalisation is a dialectic process where clear lines of demarcation between the local, national and global are not always easy to identify
Globalisation has had a significant impact on the HE industry, ironically the most globalised and globalising of sectors. The internationalisation of HE, as a consequence of globalisation (Harmon, 2005) is situated within the phenomenon. There are implications for HE institutions, as they become global economic actors who are both objects and agents/drivers of change (Enders & de Weert, 2004; Marginson, 2004; Marginson & Rhoades, 2002;).

**Internationalisation**
Knight’s (2013, p. 2) conceptualisation of internationalisation as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions (primarily teaching and learning, research, service) into the delivery of higher education” is most relevant for this study as it has a clear academic context. Arkoudis, Baik, Marginson and Cassidy’s (2012, p.10) ‘process’ and ‘outcomes’ definition of internationalising the student experience is also relevant to this study as it provides a comprehensive overview of internationalisation. Process is defined as “fostering a nationally and culturally diverse and interactive university community where all students have a sense of belonging”. Outcome is defined as “graduates who are globally aware, globally competent and able to work with culturally and linguistically diverse people either locally or anywhere in the world”. Additionally, Hellstén’s (2010, p. 2) definition of international education as “involving education for travelling scholars (original italics) who study in a ‘foreign’ host university on a temporary basis” is also relevant to the current study as it clearly demarcates the study population as temporary sojourners.

**International Students (ISs)**
Various terms have been used to describe ‘international students’. Initially described as ‘foreign students’ in the earliest studies (Gutta, 1976), the term evolved to ‘overseas students’ in the 1980s and early 1990s (Ballard, 1987, 1989; Ballard & Clanchy 1984, 1991; Barker, 1990; Burke, 1986). From the mid 1990s, the term ‘international students’ has been widely used in the literature (Ballard, 1989; Ballard & Clanchy, 1997; Barker, 1990; Burke, 1986; Ramsay, Barker & Jones 1999; Volet 1997). The use of the term indicates positive understandings and attitudes towards this group of students and the issues they face, as opposed to the initial term which emphasised difference and displacement.
Terms used in relation to ISs are linked to the underlying attitudes evident in the research foci. For example, the focus of research studies conducted in the 1980s appears to have been identifying symptoms of academic difficulty such as lack of English Language (EL) proficiency and different cultural expectations, in effect operating from a deficit perspective. Studies in this period also identified problems faced by ISs to be ‘language related’ (Zhang, Sillitoe & Webb, 1999). In the 1990s, a shift towards addressing and understanding deeper issues related to the education of ISs can be discerned in the literature (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991, 1997; Burke, 1986; Samuelowicz, 1987; Volet, 1997), where the need for students and institutions to collaborate in cross-cultural education was highlighted.

In the late nineties and early noughties, studies have taken the discussion further by considering the phenomenon of ISs as another form of colonialism. Parallels have been drawn between the internationalisation of HE in industrialised countries and earlier forms of imperialism. The term ‘international students’ is located within the discourse of economic globalisation as “trade goods” (Rhoades & Smart, 1996, p. 152). This economic connotation is made explicit when this term and ‘fee-paying students’ are collapsed and sometimes used interchangeably (Devos, 2003). In addition to the economic connection, some university academics make oblique references to ISs’ lack of EL competence. Devos (2003) makes the observation that the discourse relating to ISs conflates internationalisation and ISs with a reduction of academic standards.

Within this study, it is accepted that ISs perform an important economic function for Australia. The term ISs is used to refer to a group of students who are studying in a foreign country.

**Cross-Cultural Adjustment and Adaptation**

Generally, adjustment is viewed as a multi-dimensional process of interaction between the individual and the environment in which they are operating, in an attempt to bring about harmony between the demands and needs of the individual and that of the environment (Baker & Siryk, 1984, 1989; Kashima & Sadewo, 2016; Wu, Garza & Guzman, 2015). Adjustment has two aspects, both psychological and sociocultural (Hirai, Frazier & Syed, 2015; Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006; Stevens, Masgoret & Ward, 2007; Ward & Kennedy, 1993). Psychological adjustment is defined as relating to the mental health and overall well-being of migrants/sojourners (Ward & Low,
2004), whereas sociocultural adjustment is defined as relating to the behavioral and cognitive factors that are associated with effective performance during cross-cultural transition (Sam, Vedder, Ward & Horenczyk, 2006). Adjustment may also have connotations of unequal relationships with the notion that ISs are compelled to assimilate or socialise (Volet & Jones, 2012). The current study focuses on academic and sociocultural adjustments with the purpose of exploring ISs’ understandings and experiences of the host environment and their personal agency in attempting to navigate the demands of the host environment (Tran, 2016; Tran & Vu, 2017; Volet & Jones, 2012).

Adjustment has been defined as the reduction or satisfaction of (short-term) drives while adaptation is that which is valuable for (long-term) individual or racial survival (Shaffer & Shoben, 1956). Ramsay, Barker and Jones (1999) define adjustment as “the fit between students and the academic environment and may examine issues such as learning styles, study habits, education background, culture and language proficiency” (1999, p. 134). While the definition is comprehensive in that it encompasses all possible aspects, it is also limiting as the focus is on the ‘fit’, thus emphasising the final outcome. On the other hand, Al-Sharideh and Goe’s definition of adjustment as “a transition process that unfolds over time as students learn to cope with the exigencies of the university environment” (1998, p. 2) focuses on the process rather than the end product. Vasilopoulos (2016) uses a post-structuralist approach towards adjustment which views ‘academic discourse’ as language and culture unique to Western academic circles (Vasilopoulos, 2016). Thus, Vasilopoulos (2016) argues that “adjustment is a process of socialisation” as the newcomer negotiates their identity in the new group (2016, p. 289).

Some scholars distinguish between adjustment, viewed as the experience of change, and adaptation, also seen as the outcome of adjustment, incorporating academic, psychological and sociocultural aspects (Young & Schartner, 2014). Cross-cultural adaptation can be seen as “the dynamic process by which individuals relocating to new, unfamiliar or changed cultural environments establish (or reestablish) and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal and functional relationships with those environments (Kim, 1988, p. 13). Other scholars specifically define sociocultural adaptation in “terms of behavioral competence” which is “strongly influenced by factors underpinning culture learning and social skills acquisition” (Ward & Kennedy, 1999, p. 661).
Adjustment and adaptation both refer to a person-environment fit although the objectives and time frames may differ (Anderson, 1994, p. 300). Further, ‘academic adjustment’ (Ramsay, Barker & Jones, 1999; Zhang, Sillitoe & Webb, 1999) is an extension of the adjustment concept, referring to the challenges faced by ISs as a result of cultural distances between home and host academic cultures (Ballard & Clanchy 1984, 1991, 1997; Samuelowicz 1987; Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001; Zhu, 2016). For the purposes of this thesis, adjustment will be viewed as a transitionary process of identity negotiation in a foreign environment through a study of key influences as identified in Ramsay et al.’s (1999) definition. The key terms associated with ISs’ responses to an unfamiliar host culture are acculturation, adaptation and adjustment, all of which appear to be used interchangeably in the literature. Acculturation is defined as “changes resulting from sustained first-hand contact with members of other cultural groups” (Ward, 2001, p. 434). In this study, cross-cultural ‘adjustment’ will be used throughout as this term captures the nature of the ongoing process of adjusting to a new culture while acculturation has specific connotations which are not applicable to the context of this study.

**Arabic-Persian Cultures (APCs)**

This section provides a definition of the term ‘Middle East’ for the purposes of this study and outlines the dominant cultural framework of the APC population involved in the current study. It is necessary to provide this definition as different views exist on the nature and constitution of the Middle-East.

The Arab world is geographically and culturally diverse, consisting of 21 independent states, all of which were created by European powers (Groom, 1983; Seccombe, 1983). The people of this area, inhabiting mainly the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), are of Semitic origin and commonly united by their use of Arabic. However, not all states are completely Arabic speakers. Iran and Israel are exceptions; Persian is spoken in Iran while Hebrew and Arabic are both spoken in Israel. The Arab world is a diaglossic speech community with two forms of Arabic – ‘Colloquial Arabic’ and ‘Classical Arabic’, the latter being the language of the Quran (Al-Khatib, 2000, p. 121).

The Middle East is a Western geopolitical term coined in 1902 by an American naval strategist, Alfred Taylor Mahan for the British, who wanted to secure and maintain the
The countries comprising the geographical area of the Middle East have a long history and were the cradles of early civilisations in both Mesopotamia (present-day Iran, Syria and parts of Pakistan) and Egypt (Bourke, 2008).

The term ‘Arabic-Persian Cultures’ (APCs), used throughout this study, refers to the conglomeration of countries geographically situated around the Middle East from which the APC participants in the study originated. Some studies on students from the Middle East refer to them as Arabic International Students (AIS); however, this term did not accurately reflect the ethnic origins of all the APC participants’ as Iranians are not Arabs but of Persian origin. Thus, the authentic, generic term APC was coined and is used throughout the thesis.

Confucianist Heritage Cultures (CHCs)

Confucianist Heritage Cultures is a term which encompasses individuals from countries such as China, Korea, Vietnam, Hong Kong (HK), Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan who are predominantly influenced by Confucian values (Rao & Chan, 2009). The term, CHCs, has evolved alongside definitions of the Chinese Learner (CL). According to Watkins (1996), the CL is a student from the People’s Republic of China (PRC), HK, Taiwan and Singapore. Watkins and Biggs define CLs as students from CHC cultures “who are taught in classroom conditions … [with] large classes, expository methods, relentless norm-referenced assessment, and harsh climate” (2001, p. 3). CLs are influenced by Chinese belief systems and Confucian values that emphasise academic achievement, diligence in academic pursuits, the belief that all children regardless of innate ability can do well through the exertion of effort, and the significance of education for personal improvement and moral self-cultivation (Lee, 1996; Li, 2003). The CL must be considered as a whole person, not just a student which makes it necessary to be aware of “factors important to student outcomes” (Coverdale-Jones, 2006, p. 148). At this juncture, it is necessary to understand that in considering the CL, scholars are attempting to focus on societal aspects rather than cultural heritage per se as affecting student learning (Clark & Gieve, 2006; Chan & Rao, 2010). Therefore “the Chinese culture of learning” is a description of the context of learning rather than the way in which things are done in China (Clark & Gieve, 2006).
The term ‘the Chinese Learner’ is arguably a label with negative connotations, implying a monolithic entity (Biggs, 1990b). However, in recent studies, the term is used in the context of identifying economic, social, cultural and religious influences of CHCs, thus suggesting a discursive approach to understanding the CL (Clark & Gieve, 2006). The definition of the CL as a whole person who is influenced by a range of factors is considered in the current study in order to obtain a holistic view of learning. For the purposes of the study, the generic term CHC will be used because it has fewer negative connotations compared to CL but still reflects the influence of Confucianism.

Background and Rationale of the Study
In the past 50 years, global student mobility has enabled students from different countries to study in foreign destinations such as the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK) and Australia. These countries have become significant tertiary education providers for ISs. In response, international HE in Australia has undergone substantial changes, from hosting exchange students to taking on large numbers of full fee-paying international students (Zhang, 2002). At the time of the data collection for this study, the international student population consisted of nearly half a million students from more than 214 nationalities (Australian Education International (AEI), 2016) compared to only 113 in 1985 (Linacre, 2007).

Due to the high numbers of international, full fee-paying students in Australia, the field of international education has become a major income earner. Currently, education is the third-largest Australian export after iron ore and coal (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016). The latest statistics indicate that international education contributed $19.9 billion dollars to the Australian economy in the 2015 – 16 financial year, which was an increase of 9.4% from the 2014 – 15 financial year (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016). The HE sector, comprising of approximately 2 874 792 international student enrolments and 956 062 commencements, contributed $13.7 billion in export income in 2016 (ABS, 2016). The growth in 2016 compared to 2002 is apparent as there were 1 272 861 enrolments and 522 262 commencements in 2002. Thus, with increasing numbers of ISs choosing to study in Australia, there is a need to understand the needs and experiences of this student cohort. The current study addresses a gap in the literature as it explores the experiences of ISs and their decision-making processes as they exercise different forms of agency to navigate the demands and challenges of the host country.
Provision of International Education in Australia

In Australia, HE consists of 40 public universities, two international universities and one private university, with more than 130 other HE providers. All 43 universities are self-accrediting; consequently universities determine and control what is taught, how it is taught and by whom, with little or no control from the State or Commonwealth governments (McInnis, 2010). The unique aspect of HE in Australia is that governance, regulation and decision-making responsibilities are shared between the Commonwealth, states and territories and the institutions themselves. Despite these shared responsibilities, it is evident that the key driver of HE is the Commonwealth government as its policies “created and facilitated an international education market” (Megarry, 2007, p. 39). Thus, the massive growth in Australian HE can be attributed to the Commonwealth government’s role.

In addition to financial benefits, there is a range of benefits for Australia in having ISs in the HE sector (Banks, Olsen & Pearce, 2007). These include the establishment and development of education services as a leading industry, and providing a solution to the shortage in the current skilled workforce by providing IS graduates with opportunities to enter the skilled migration program.

Further, the IS graduate population in Australia represents a strong marketing potential by projecting Australian influence through the 600 000 alumni who return to their home countries. This again makes it necessary that ISs who graduate from Australian universities are well equipped to enter the workforce here or, if they choose to return home, are able to project a positive image of Australia by exhibiting the necessary graduate attributes.

With increasing numbers of ISs choosing Australia as their destination for HE, the issue of student adjustment is becoming significant, particularly given the complexity and multidimensionality of this concept. Adjustment issues have been studied to identify the challenges faced by ISs while studying in a foreign environment, particularly the Australian tertiary context (Burns, 1991; Thomson, Rosenthal & Russell, 2006; Volet & Kee, 1993; Yates & Nguyen, 2012; Zhang, 2002). These studies have highlighted adjustment issues including unfamiliar expectations in the academic environment, along with challenges of EL proficiency and forming friendship networks.
Some authors have expressed concern about viewing ISs, particularly those from the Asian region, as a homogeneous group (Burns, 1991; Madge, Raghuram & Noxolo, 2009; Nayak & Venkatraman 2010; Sawir, 2005; Tange & Jensen, 2012; Volet & Kee, 1993). ISs are unique and bring a range of diverse experiences into the host culture. Thus, there is a need to avoid viewing them as homogenous which can lead to the development of ‘deficit’ perspectives. Each culture that ISs come from is different, as are the individuals, which comprise that culture. ISs represent a diverse spectrum of nationalities and views which need to be accommodated in IS research agendas.

Concerns have been expressed about the academic environment in tertiary institutions and institutions ability to provide ISs with positive learning experiences (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Devlin & Samarawickrema, 2010). ISs originate from varied backgrounds and bring with them expectations, especially in relation to the academic environment. Australian institutions, academics and systems appear to be insufficiently equipped to meet the demands of the cultural and linguistic diversity of ISs (Devlin & Samarawickrema, 2010; Haigh, 2002; Tran, 2011; Zhang, 2002). According to Devlin and Samarawickrema (2010, p. 119):

The massification and internationalisation of Australian higher education have meant that student diversity has increased and therefore effective teaching must be able to manage and address such diversity.

The literature highlights that tertiary institutions have not successfully addressed the needs of ISs.

A key issue identified in the literature and Australian government reports is ISs’ EL proficiencies. In particular, the report on Evaluation of the General Skilled Migration Categories (Birrell, 2006) identified ISs as graduating from Australian universities with low levels of EL proficiencies. This raises the question of how the students obtained their degrees despite low EL proficiency levels. Secondly, and more importantly, the report questioned the low levels of EL proficiency amongst ISs even after having studied in Australia for a few years. However, EL proficiency may not be the only issue influencing academic success of ISs. Zhang’s 2002 study on ISs at Victoria University identified cultural and educational background as issues that play a significant role in the cohort’s academic and sociocultural adjustments. Ramsay, Barker and Jones’ (1999) study of Griffith University ISs identified critical incidents that affected their academic
adjustments. These studies highlight the complexity and multidimensionality of the issues facing ISs.

It is incumbent on Australian universities to provide culturally sensitive campuses, university community programs and services to help ISs’ academic and sociocultural adjustment to Australia, and in particular their campus of study. ISs are in the process of attaining cultural understandings which require engagement with “multiple literacies and discourses” (Lawrence, 2005, p. 243). The current study contributes to an evolving body of research which views ISs as individuals with a strong sense of personal agency, thus distinguishing this study from previous studies which adopt a homogenous perspective.

The rationale for the selection of ISs from APCs and CHCs is based on the dramatic increase in APC and CHC student enrolments in Australia in recent years. Furthermore, few studies have been conducted on APCs in Australian HE, as this group of students are relative newcomers. Students from the Middle East were few in number until 2005, but statistics show a remarkable growth since then (AEI, 2016). Table 1.1 highlights the number of ISs from China, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), Iran and Iraq (participants’ countries of origin) in Australian HE in 2002 and 2016. China has always been an integral part of Australian HE, having been in the top 10 students’ source countries since 2000 (AEI, 2016). This is reflected in Table 1.1 by the high numbers of enrolments in 2002 and the large growth of enrolments (536%) from 2002 to 2016. In contrast, student enrolments from MENA countries were low in 2002 (ranging from 68 to 1 951, as shown in Table 1.1), but have increased by between 1000 - 10 000% in 2016.

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Despite the strong growth of ISs in Australian HE, research in the area seems both too narrow and too diversified. Research tends to either focus on only Asian/South-East Asian students or a broad group of ISs. Furthermore, while there has been consistent,
detailed research on ISs, little change is apparent in the Australian HE academic environment (Marginson, 2007; Tran, 2011; Webb, 2005). Few studies have concentrated on the performance of ISs from an intercultural learning perspective (Arkoudis, Watty, Baik, Yu, Borland, Chang, Lang, Lang & Pearce, 2013; Taylor, 1994; Tran & Pham, 2016). A further limitation of a large body of existing empirical research is the assumption that ISs are a homogenous group. It is important to recognise the diversity of ISs as academic difficulties are correlated with adjustment issues (Anderson, 2013; Lawrence, 2005; Lin & Yi, 1997; Madge et. al. 2009; Rizvi, 2007, Singh & Doherty, 2008). Thus, while the issues faced by ISs have been researched, tertiary academic environments show little understanding of the complexities associated with ISs, especially in terms of viewing them as unique individuals. The current study attempts to add to the literature by formulating theoretical propositions on the issues and strategies developed by ISs in addressing gaps in academic and sociocultural adjustments. By studying specific groups of ISs (APCs and CHCs), this study builds understandings of ISs as members of cultural groups rather than as members of what has previously been seen as a homogeneous group of ISs.

**Research Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this research was to explore and identify the academic and sociocultural experiences and perceptions of ISs from APCs and CHCs when studying at an Australian tertiary institution, to obtain insights into the issues and strategies they develop in transitioning from home to host cultures. Characteristics unique to these two cultural groups were also identified and described. This research is framed by one overarching research question and four guiding research questions.

**Overarching Research Question**

How do ISs from APCs and CHCs adjust to the academic and socio-cultural environment at an Australian university?

In order to answer the overarching question, four guiding questions were developed.

**Guiding Research Questions**

1. What issues are faced by ISs from APCs and CHCs when adjusting to an Australian academic environment? How do the issues identified impact on the
ability of these students to cope with and meet Australian academic expectations and demands?

The first research question explores adjustment issues faced by ISs from APCs and CHCs in the Australian academic environment, as the literature indicates there are considerable differences in the academic cultures of home and host countries. Thus, the question explored the political and sociocultural background of APCs and CHCs with the aim of understanding individual cultural identities which inform academic behaviours. The question also sought to obtain insights into the extent to which the issues identified impacted on adjustments, as scholars believe cultural dissonance can cause ISs to experience significant stress in new, unfamiliar academic contexts.

2. What strategies are developed by ISs from APCs and CHCs in adjusting to studying in an Australian university? What reasons are given for using these strategies?

The focus of the second research question was to describe the ways in which ISs from APCs and CHCs sought to make meaning of the new Australian academic environment. The question aimed to explore the strategies through which these ISs negotiated the demands and expectations of the Australian academic environment.

3. What issues are faced by ISs from APCs and CHCs when adjusting to an Australian sociocultural environment?

As the sociocultural environment is an instrumental aspect of ISs’ lives, the third research question aimed to explore the issues faced by ISs from APCs and CHCs in adjusting to the Australian sociocultural environment.

4. What strategies are developed by ISs from APCs and CHCs in adjusting to the wider Australian social environment? What reasons are given for using these strategies?

The aim of the fourth research question was to elucidate the ways in which ISs from APCs and CHCs attempted to adjust to the Australian sociocultural environment. This question also explored their rationale in developing these strategies.
Significance and Originality of the Research

This study provides substantial, innovative contributions to knowledge in the area of experiences of ISs studying in the Australian academic and sociocultural environment from the perspective of two specific ethnic groups, APCs and CHCs. While there are many other studies on the topic of ISs’ adjustments, this study provides detail and novelty to related areas of research. The detail and novelty of the current study lies particularly in the comparative analysis of two IS groups, one of which (APC) is significantly under-researched.

One of the most significant contributions of the current study is that it provides insights into understanding individual cultural groups of ISs. As research into ISs from APCs is in its infancy, the current study contributes specifically to this cohort of students while also adding to the literature on ISs from CHCs studying in Australia. The comparative perspective used in the current study indicates that ISs are diverse and need to be studied as specific groups.

The study contributes to an evolving body of literature which views ISs as strongly agentic individuals who respond to new environments in a dynamic manner. The personal agency of ISs was found to be instrumental in guiding their responses to the changed academic and sociocultural environments. While ISs were found to experience significant challenges, as strongly motivated individuals they developed strategies to overcome the identified challenges.

The study is significant as it provides new insights on adjustment issues which ISs face when studying in a foreign environment that impede or assist their learning. The four propositions developed in this study provide insights into ISs’ academic and sociocultural adjustments. Initially, cultural dissonance was evident but led gradually to adjustment to the host environment, primarily in the academic domain.

Finally, this study makes an original contribution to the field in the development of a Model of ISs’ Academic and Sociocultural Adjustment. This model provides insights into the dynamic, malleable identity construction of ISs through both an academic and sociocultural lens. Highlighted in this model is the personal agency of ISs who made conscious, deliberate decisions to adjust to the academic environment, as the consequences of failure are too high. The model describes ISs’ transient identity as
Position of the Researcher

As articulated by Clark and Devin, “reflexivity is intricately woven throughout all facets of research” (2014, p. 1). Thus, the researcher in the current study made concerted attempts to consider the influence and impact of her personal and professional context on the research. This section describes the researcher’s position, which is revisited in Chapter Nine, as the writer reflects on the ways in which the current study enhanced her professional life.

The researcher is an educator with more than 20 years teaching experience in university pre-tertiary courses, dominated by ISs. The researcher was born and raised in Singapore where she worked as a secondary school English and History teacher prior to migrating to Australia as an adult in the mid-nineties. The researcher’s migrant context and prior experience with non-native speakers of English placed her in a position of empathising with the experiences of ISs. The researcher commenced a lecturing job at a local university with the English Language Centre, and has subsequently worked in various capacities at the university with ISs from pre-tertiary to PhD levels. Beginning as a lecturer, she eventually became the coordinator of an Academic Preparatory Program (APP) before being offered the position of Director/Head of Department of the area in 2005. As a senior manager, the researcher worked with academics at the university from various disciplines. The impetus for the current study arose from the researcher’s encounters with academics at the university who not only perceived ISs as ‘cash cows’ but also held stereotypical misconceptions about ISs. Often, ISs were viewed from a deficit perspective as rote learners with passive learning styles, lacking in critical thinking and analytical skills, and who did not adjust easily to the Australian context. Dispelling such misconceptions and privileging the silenced voice of ISs was a major motivation for the current study.

As mentioned, the researcher was the coordinator of an APP. This program aimed to bridge the gap between ISs’ home cultures and the academic environment of the Australian university. The success rates of graduating students from this course at a
mainstream university indicated to the researcher the value and need for academic and cultural literacy programs.

In recent years, the researcher worked closely with academics from Chinese universities both in their home country and in Australia. Observing the teaching styles in the classroom and the teacher/student relationship outside the classroom was an enlightening experience which enabled the researcher to develop deeper insights into the complexities of the cultural framework and how these are challenged when confronted with a new academic and social environment. This study is an attempt to develop and share insights and understanding in order to reduce the misconceptions held about ISs.

**Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis is divided into nine chapters. Chapter One provided the introduction to the study and presented the aims and purposes of the research. Descriptions of key terms were provided, along with the background and rationale of the study. The overarching research question and four guiding questions were introduced. The significance of the research, position of the researcher, and structure of the thesis were also presented.

Chapter Two defines globalisation and internationalisation and presents the evolution of the Australian HE regulatory environment. The chapter provides a historical, chronological overview of ISs in Australia and explains the chronological development of the legislative/regulatory environment. The regulatory environment is important in the context of the Australian HE industry, as it has been responsible for shaping and also been shaped by the sector.

Chapter Three provides the conceptual framework for the current study. A review of prior studies and models on cross-cultural adaptation and adjustment is provided. The chapter explains positioning theory and the importance of personal agency in the context of ISs. The role of motivation with details on Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) and Self-Determined Theory (SDT) and learning goals is provided. Issues relating to ISs’ EL proficiencies are also described. The chapter concludes with a review of studies on gender differences in ISs’ adjustments.
Chapter Four presents information on the cultural identity of APC and CHC learners. Cultural identities of APC and CHC learners are described, derived from the wider political and sociocultural context. The influence of Islam and the political culture on the academic environment of APCs is described, while the influence of Confucianism on the CHC academic context is highlighted. Characteristics of teachers and learners in APCs and CHCs are also presented.

Chapter Five outlines the qualitative, case-study research methodology used in the study. The chapter provides details on the 17 participants and data collection methods. The process of analysis which led to the derivation of four propositions and eight sub-propositions is explained in detail. This chapter also provides details on the trustworthiness of the findings and the ethics associated with the research.

Chapter Six is the first of three chapters that details the findings. This chapter presents Proposition One and its two sub-propositions. The chapter presents the findings in relation to participants’ perceptions of the home and host academic environments. Roles of teachers and learners in the home and host environments are described and possible reasons for cultural dissonance are identified.

Chapter Seven provides further information on the academic environment with a focus on the learner’s responses. Challenges faced by ISs are explained as well as the adaptation strategies they developed to address these challenges. Propositions Two and Three and their sub-propositions are discussed in this chapter. These propositions highlight the challenges that the ISs faced, along with the strategies of adjustment they developed through active personal agency.

Sociocultural issues of adjustment are the focus of Chapter Eight. Strategies developed by participants to cope with these challenges are also discussed. The chapter provides insights into the identity construction of participants in the sociocultural environment, which is different to the identity developed in the academic environment.

Chapter Nine concludes the thesis and answers the original research questions. The limitations of the research, implications for policy and practice, and ideas for future research are also presented.
Conclusion

This introductory chapter provided the rationale and background of the current study and highlighted the context of international HE in Australia. The parameters and scope of the research was outlined. Key terms and definitions relevant to the current study were provided. The next chapter, Chapter Two, provides detailed information on the twin concepts of globalisation and internationalisation which were the cause and consequence of international Australian HE. Chapter Two also explains the evolution of the legislative and regulatory environment in Australia which is closely intertwined with the growth of the international HE sector.
CHAPTER TWO
AUSTRALIAN HIGHER EDUCATION – CONTEXT AND EVOLUTION OF THE REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

Introduction
This is the first of three chapters that reviews the literature relevant to this study. This chapter presents the context and evolution of the Australian HE regulatory environment. The chapter starts with definitions and interpretations of globalisation and internationalisation, acknowledging these phenomena to be complex, multidisciplinary and rapidly evolving concepts in a highly technological society. The theoretical underpinnings of these two key terms in relation to the HE sector are discussed. Following these definitions, the chronological development of the HE sector in Australia is discussed, reflecting the dominant philosophies of specific socio-historical periods. Each period is signified by the development of an increasingly government regulated legislative environment, a unique aspect being the nexus between HE and migration policies. Internationalisation has evolved from a focus on education as aid in the post-World War II period, to trade in the 1980s and a corporate model in the 1990s. From 2000 onwards, there was a distinct change in the philosophy as quality assurance mechanisms assumed greater significance, with debates from the mid-2000s focusing on the need for a more sustainable international HE model.

Definitions and Approaches of Globalisation
This section will provide an overview of the key definitions and approaches to globalisation before discussing definitions and interpretations of internationalisation. The study conceptualises globalisation as the overarching context with internationalisation and the internationalisation of HE as its outcome.

Globalisation – Definitions
Despite the ubiquity of the term ‘globalisation’, a plethora of definitions exists. The salient characteristics of the concept will be provided with a brief discussion on globalisation and its influence on the development of the international HE sector.

Key elements of globalisation are presented to provide an understanding of the vast literature on globalisation that form the core of definitions developed by scholars (Al-Rodhan & Stoudmann, 2006; Held, McGrew, Goldblatt & Perraton, 1999; Legrain,
The complex nature of globalisation can only be understood if viewed as a process with interconnections and interdependencies between different parts of the world. It is a multi-faceted process emerging out of economic, political, social and cultural practices (Legrain, 2003). This is evident where events that occur in one part of the world have consequences on other parts of the world (Giddens, 1990; McGrew, 1992) due to the “multiplicity of linkages and interconnections between states and societies” (McGrew, 1992, p. 23). The resulting interdependencies intensify worldwide social relations, transforming the organisation of human affairs due to the removal of spatial boundaries (Held et al., 1999). Science and technology are instrumental aspects of the ‘spread’ of globalisation which is a consequence of globalisation (Walker, 2008). Globalisation is an ongoing process, which affects every facet of human life with connotations of both progression and regression; a process that affects human activity at social, political and economic levels. The four domains of globalisation, as presented in Figure 2.1, will now be described.
Economic Globalisation

The key aspect of economic globalisation is the expansion of capitalism which has brought about the interdependence and integration of world markets and economies. Some view this as a triumph of capitalism, which Wallerstein (2004, p. 20) views as the “inevitable progress over feudalism” and the primary cause of globalisation in modern times (Hardt & Negri, 2000). Others highlight the resulting inevitable integration of world economies and expansion of communication due to the increased volume of world trade, transport and communications (Mussa, 2000; Shangquan, 2000; Tang, 2014). Globalisation is quintessentially about economic production and processes (Avinash, 2000; Blanco & Jona, 2011; Scholte, 2000), characterised by an “interwoven net of factories, fields and forests, banks, governments, labouring and farming populations, cities and transport” (Avinash, 2000, p. 3).

Due to the dynamism in the movements and flows of capital and technology, world markets have become increasingly interdependent with national resources becoming more internationally mobile (OECD, 2005). This has resulted in changing structures due to the “production, consumption and trade of goods and assets that comprise the base of the international political economy” (UNESCO, 2001, p. 1). Economically, the world is becoming increasingly integrated as the global economy encroaches into far-flung places, leading to more and more homogeneity in the world economy. The perception is that the world is growing smaller due to an “enlargement of world communication” and “the horizon of a world market” leading to “the new international division of labour” (Cox, as cited in Scholte, 1999, p. 15). Globalisation is a mind-set for thinking about complex international developments with economics as the basis since “all economic activity, whether local, regional or national, must be conducted within a perspective and attitude that is constantly global and worldwide in its scope” (Spich, 1995, p. 7), emphasising the need for global consciousness.

Sociocultural Globalisation

Increased economic activity, with the perception of the world growing smaller, manifests itself in the sociocultural domain due to increased intercultural contact. International cultural exchanges via migration, tourism and student exchange programs have increased, influencing the HE sector significantly (Dreher, Gaston & Martens, 2008). Globalisation has increased contact and brought about new levels of
interconnectedness (Block, 2004; Robertson, 2006). The inevitable cultural and ideological manifestations have led to the development of a common consciousness on a world scale, with the intensification and expansion of social relations (Long & Labadi, 2010; Steger, 2002).

Globalisation is the “starting point for acculturation” leading to the “homogenisation of world peoples and cultures” (Berry, 2008, p. 332). However, this is not always unidirectional as the web of global interactions is complex, generating both uniformity and difference. These global interactions result in ‘glocalisation’ which combines the global and the local or the universal and the particular (Androutsopoulos, 2010; Coupland, 2010). “Glocalization both highlights how local cultures may critically adapt or resist “global” phenomena, and reveals the way in which the very creation of localities is a standard component of globalisation” (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007, p. 134). Thus, the argument that globalisation is Americanisation or the Westernisation of the world with convergence in how human societies dress and eat (Latouche, 1996; Tomlinson, 2005) is not justified.

**Political Globalisation**

The political dimension of globalisation highlights the role of governments in promoting the phenomenon as well as the blurring of national boundaries, inevitable as the world becomes increasingly interdependent. Governments are responsible for globalisation through policy creation, but ironically, also find themselves pressured to adapt “economic policies to neo-liberal ideologies in order to interact with the dynamics of global capitalism” (Dreher et al., 2008, p. 9-10). Traditional geographical boundaries become blurred due to increased interconnectedness, an effect of the constant crossing and movements of people, goods and services (Held et al., 1999; Yeoh, 2009). Nation state formations are reconfigured and the “space of flows” supersedes the “space of places” (Castell, 1996, p. 4). Bill Clinton, in his 2000 State Union address, alludes to this as he explains that globalisation must “bring together the world around freedom, democracy and peace to those who would tear it apart” (Clinton, 2000). Clinton’s view focuses primarily on Western political ideologies as a common force uniting the world. This expresses the American perspective of globalisation as Westernisation, which as shown above, is not necessarily the perspective, adopted by other scholars.
Technological Globalisation

The technological dimension of globalisation is important, as it is both a cause and consequence of the phenomenon. Langhorne (2001) provides a technologically deterministic interpretation of globalisation, identifying three phases: the invention of the steam engine and its application to land and sea transport and the invention of the telegraph, the development of rocket and satellite technology, and the advent of computers (Rennen & Martens, 2003, p. 140). According to Rennen and Martens (2003, p. 140), the invention of the microchip was a “major turning point in the development of globalization”. Increasing global interdependence relates to technological advancements as innovative technologies provide novel ways in establishing connections across the world at different levels (Aurifeille, Aluja, Medlin & Tisdell, 2011). Technology is fundamental in the spread of globalisation and allows for links to be made between distant parts of the world through advancements in communication. However, it would be fallacious to view technology as the only aspect of globalisation as it is highly dependent on political, social and economic structures to allow it to progress.

Globalisation and its Critics

Critics of globalisation view the process as a return to colonialism (Neeraj, 2001), producing economic exploitation and social inequality (Harris, 2000). Some authors see globalisation as contributing to worsening economic disparities between nations and cultures (Blanco & Razzaque, 2011). Globalisation as being inherently exploitative is a recurring theme and one of the strongest criticisms levied against it. Globalisation is progressing in an unfettered fashion as there is no “threat from any viable contrary political project” (Hirst & Thompson, 1996, p. 6), implying exploitation. The exploitative, colonialist aspects of globalisation, while uncomfortable, are to some extent a reflection of the reality of a globalised world where the ‘North’ (First world/Developed countries) has progressed at the expense of the ‘South’ (Third world/Developing countries), reflecting an ideology which highlights the supremacy of the more powerful North countries (Mahammadbaksh, Fathiazar, Hobbi & Ghodratpour, 2012, p. 14).

The loss of traditional cultures conveys the paradox of globalisation. It is a force for extending cultures but at the same time leads to the “compression of cultures” (Featherstone, 1995, p. 6-7). Culture compression and homogenisation as a result of
imposed intercultural contact causes unnecessary interdependencies (Marsella, 2012). Trudgill stated that the cultural homogeneity of the world is due to the “influence of the omnipresent American culture, and the insidious spread of English at the expense of lesser-used languages” (2002, p. 147). The views expressed by these scholars are understandable given that many heterogeneous cultures are assuming different degrees of homogeneity as the world becomes interdependent, leading to the loss of traditional cultures as Western culture imposes itself on more countries. Despite the negativity expressed by some scholars, globalisation is generally viewed as an inevitable, all-encompassing process which has existed throughout history.

**Internationalisation of HE**

The previous section provided an overview of the predominant domains of globalisation, which is a dialectic process where clear lines of demarcation between the local, national and global are not always easy to identify. Globalisation has had a significant impact on the HE industry, ironically the most globalised and globalising of sectors. The internationalisation of HE, as a consequence of globalisation, is situated within the phenomenon with implications for HE institutions as they become global economic actors who are both objects and agents/drivers of change (Enders & de Weert, 2004; Marginson & Rhoades, 2002;). It has led to the spread of English as the universal ‘lingua franca’ which has made HE in the English medium a desirable commodity.

HE institutions, which are often the drivers of change and those with the resources and knowledge capital to both respond and initiate strategies for change and development, are vital to the growth of internationalisation. Globalisation is inside HE as well as outside it and is “shaped by human action” (Marginson, 2006, p. 1). Traditionally, HE institutions have been more internationally open than other sectors due to knowledge immersion and they are considered important as mediums for a range of “cross-border relationships and continual flows of people, information, knowledge, technologies, products and financial capital” (Marginson & van der Vende, 2007, p. 7). This justifies and explains the rapid growth of the international HE sector which can be argued is a direct response to the challenges issued by globalisation. Altbach and Knight (2007) argue that economic, political and societal forces have pushed 21st century HE towards international involvement. This has led to shifts/changes in international education from “diplomacy and intercultural learning to economic motivations” (Lee & Rice, 2007, p. 383), leading to a corporatised model of education where the shift is from customer to
consumer dominated by a market-driven paradigm (Marginson, 2011). Paradoxically, universities are both “objects of the processes of globalisation” and its “key agents” (Enders & de Weert, 2004, p. 27), central in global transformation but also transformed in turn (Teichler, 2004).

The predominant use of EL in all areas of human activity has been a major impact of globalisation on the HE sector, as the phenomena encompasses transcultural and transnational integration. Held et al. (1999) and Sawir (2005) attribute the ‘globalisation of learning’ and the spread of English as the universal lingua franca (Crystal, 2003) as one of the most significant influences of globalisation on HE. Held et al. (1999) argue that because English stands at the very centre of the global language system, it has become the lingua franca par excellence and continues to entrench this dominance in a self-reinforcing process. It occupies a high level status and is the language of communication in business, politics, administration, science and academia as well as the dominant language of globalised advances and popular culture. ISs’ perception of Western education as a desirable ‘commodity’ can be understood in this context.

Of most relevance to this study is the context of international HE which is situated within the globalisation phenomenon as both a cause and consequence, especially as it relates to internationalisation. Globalisation and internationalisation are dynamically linked, whereby the former serves as “the catalyst” and the latter is “a response in a proactive way” (Knight, 1999, p. 6). Thus, this study adopts the definition that globalisation is a dynamic process that influences, and is in turn influenced by, the international HE industry, as the latter is an inevitable development brought about by globalisation.

This section has set the context for a discussion of internationalisation of the HE sector which has become more attractive as non-English speaking populations attempt to enhance their efficacy and efficiency in the new globalised environment. The following section provides the definition of internationalisation within the HE context.

**Internationalisation of HE – Definitions**

This section begins by providing definitions of internationalisation in the context of HE and outlines the evolution of key terms within the sector. The final part of this section provides statistics related to the internationalisation in the global HE sector. The
definition of internationalisation in HE is evolutionary in nature with many interpretations being offered by scholars. While no real consensus appears to have been reached, the need to have a working definition to enable robust discussions to take place has been highlighted (Arkoudis, et. al, 2012; Enders & de Weert, 2002). In a quest for commonality, key elements of internationalisation were identified. These included the status of the university within the international community, academic mobility for staff and students, teaching and learning outcomes, the inclusion of internationalised curricula, transnational/cross-border education, and international development collaborations (Knight, 2004).

Initial definitions of internationalisation had a primarily institutional dimension with a focus on internationalised curricula, typically with an international or intercultural element embedded in institutional programs (Arum & van der Water, 1992; Knight, 1994). Some of these definitions highlighted the necessity of internationalised curricula as necessary in the development of graduate skills for an interdependent world (Kälvermark & van der Wende, 1997; Leask, 2015). The definitions provided indicate a movement from an exclusive focus on education as aid to viewing it as trade. These were primarily contextualised within the institution, ignoring the national and international arenas, both of which have an instrumental role in the actual practice of internationalisation.

Table 2.1 highlights the evolution of terminology associated with internationalisation which reflects the changing ideologies of the different time periods. Some of these terms will be discussed to provide a working definition of internationalisation as it relates to the current study.
The evolutionary nature of internationalisation is most apparent in Knight’s research, which identified four approaches (activity, competency, ethos and process) to internationalisation (Knight, 1999). These were essentially a description rather than a definition. Knight’s 2004 definition of internationalisation focused on the integration of intercultural/international dimensions into the main functions of the university (teaching, research and service). Internationalisation should be viewed as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (Knight, 2004, p. 2). The strength of this definition lies in its neutrality and non-prescriptive nature. Furthermore, it focuses on educational objectives and functions. However, Byram (2012) argues that Knight’s (2004) claim to neutrality is misleading as the definition also refers to functions and delivery, implying a commodification of education later identified as risks. Knight highlights a further limitation as the definition does not articulate traditional values associated with internationalisation such as partnership, collaboration, mutual benefit or exchange (Knight, 2013). Knight’s (2013) revised definition provides an overarching
framework within which any study related to internationalisation can be situated. Knight (2013) explains that internationalisation is not an ‘ism’ which implies an ideology. Rather, it is a process because it is evolutionary and on-going, involving two pillars of internationalisation, namely ‘at-home’ and ‘cross-border’.

Internationalisation is a companion and a reaction to globalisation in the area of HE, and considered an instrument which can enhance the quality of education and research. It can be regarded as a humanistic value, diametrically opposed to pure commercialisation and economic benefit. Rizvi (2007) concurs with this view, arguing that the essential conceptual framework of internationalisation adopted by administrators and stakeholders is a misguided one. It appears to be based on economic rationales and a reification of cultures, which Rizvi (2007) suggests is neo-liberal imagery and hints at the commodification of education which was implicit in Knight’s (2004) definitions.

As explained in Chapter One, both Knight’s 2004 definition and the AEI definition are adopted in this study. Knight’s 2004 definition is most relevant as it is “aimed at the heart of academia” (Knight, 2013, p. 2). Additionally, the Arkoudis, et. al., (2012) definition identified process and outcomes, both of which are directly relevant to the Australian context while Hellstén’s (2010, p. 2) description of ISs as *travelling scholars* clearly identifies the population of the current study.

This section has discussed the key definitions of internationalisation as it pertains to this study, emphasising that HE institutions have always been subject to international influences. Marginson’s argument that “global flows and convergences, are transferring how agent and social institutions function whether global, national or local” (2011, p. 377) is most appropriate in the HE sector, as this environment is not only open to global forces but is often shaped by national governments.

**International Context of HE - Statistics**

Global statistics provide a comprehensive picture of the dramatic growth in the international HE sector. Figure 2.2 presents a summary of the worldwide numbers of internationally mobile students across time. In 1975, there were only 0.8 million students enrolled in HE programs outside their country of citizenship. This gradually increased until 1995 (1.7 million), after which growth became more rapid. Between 1975 and 2010, there was an increase from 0.8 million to 4.1 million, representing an
increase of 412.5%, with a 33.3% increase between 2005 (3 million) and 2010 (4.1 million). Since 2000, the number of foreign students enrolled worldwide increased by 77%, with an average annual growth rate of 6.6% (OECD, 2012).

Figure 2.2: OECD Worldwide Numbers of Internationally Mobile Students (Source: OECD, 2012)

According to the International Consultants for Educations and Fairs (ICEF), approximately five million tertiary students were studying abroad in 2016, an increase of 67% since 2005. ICEF predicts this number will increase to eight million tertiary students by 2025. These figures are indicative of the current strong growth in the sector as well as its future expansion. Translated into economic value, the OECD estimated revenue of US $30 million in the global market for post-secondary education in 1998. In 2010, it was estimated that a revenue of US $80 million was made in the HE export industry, although this figure was later revised to US $50 million (Vincent-Lancrin, 2009).

The OECD countries appear to have the dominant share of international student enrolments. Statistics indicate that just over 77% of students studying abroad do so in an OECD country. More than four million tertiary students were enrolled outside their country of citizenship in 2014. Of these, only 10% were enrolled in non-OECD countries. As seen in Figure 2.3, the top five destinations for tertiary studies were the US (26%), United Kingdom (13%), Australia (8%), Germany (7%) and France (7%) in 2014. Asian students account for 53% of all students studying abroad internationally (OECD, 2016). This is the most recent data available at the time of writing this thesis.
The largest numbers of students come from China, India and Korea, with three out of every four enrolled in an OECD country.

![Distribution of International Students in Tertiary Education by Country of Destination, 2014 (OECD, 2016)](image)

**HE – Australian Context**

This section discusses the context of HE in Australia. The historical development of HE in Australia from the post-World War II period to current day is presented.

**Development of HE in Australia (Historical Context)**

The extensive scale of internationalisation in HE is represented by the sector being both the country’s top service and the third most important export overall valued at $19.2 billion, with only coal and iron ore being of greater value (Deloitte Access Economics, 2015). The OECD’s *Education at a Glance* (2016) shows that Australia was the third largest destination for ISs studying at the tertiary level in 2014 (8%), behind the US and UK.

Figure 2.4 illustrates the growth and trends in international student enrolments in Australia in all sectors from 1994 to 2015. As shown in Figure 2.4, ISs in Australian HE have increased every year until 2009. The growth was sustained despite the Asian financial crisis of the 1990s and the first stage of the 2008-2010 global financial crises. The figures indicate that enrolments had increased from a low of 50 000 in 1990 to over 200 000 by 2003, a 300% increase. In 2002, ISs paid a total of $1.45 billion in tuition fees, indicating Australia’s popularity as a study destination (ABS, 2004). Australia hosted 6.9% of all foreign students in the world in 2008, which is significant given that
the country only has a small population of 22 million. The total national revenue in HE for 2008 was $2.6 billion, 14.9% of all income (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) 2010; OECD, 2010). Enrolments grew by an average rate of 8.5% per year between 2002 (124,698) and 2007 (192,177). In 2009, 22% of all Australian tertiary students were international (DEEWR, 2010). Eckel, Green and Affolter-Caine’s (2004) proposition that there are three main drivers behind the internationalisation of HE (revenue generation, prestige and academic quality) is certainly relevant in the Australian context. Yet another conclusion that can be drawn from the figures is that the first half of 2009 was the high point of the international student export industry, quite different to the second half of 2009 when commencements slowed down. The HE sector was going through changes, driven by adjustments to Australia’s migration policy and changing perceptions of the Australian education market, increased value of the Australian dollar, and growth of overseas competition (ABS, 2010).

![International Student Enrolments, 1994-2015](image)

**Figure 2.4: International Enrolments, 1994-2015 (AEI International Student Data, 2016; Commonwealth of Australia)**

Despite the massive growth in the international student industry from 1994-2010, the industry showed signs of slowing down between 2010-12. During this period there were a low rate of offshore applications to study onshore. In the second half of 2010 onwards, the number of offshore visas decreased and international student numbers decreased, first in Vocational Education and Training (VET) and English Language (EL) colleges and then in HE, coming almost to a stop in 2010 (Marginson, 2011). The downturn in new applications in this period was supported by ISs already onshore who were
applying for further studies, masking the real extent of the decline in international student enrolment in all sectors, especially the HE sector. From a decline between 2010 to 2012, enrolments and commencements began to gradually increase from the second half of 2012 to 2016. ISs enrolments began to climb steadily from 2013 and the industry recovered substantially in 2015. Declining enrolments from India and the PRC (Australia’s main source countries) began to stabilise. In 2015, Chinese students made up 26.6% of all student enrolments, Indian students 11.2%, Vietnamese students 4.6%, South Korean students 4.4% and Thai students 4.2% (Deloitte Access Economics [DAE] Eduworld Austrade Report, 2015).

Table 2.2 provides a summary of the milestones in the development of the Australian HE sectors and key government policies from the 1950s – 2012, which will be discussed in the following sections.
Table 2.2: Summary of Milestones in Australian International HE (Adapted from Meiras, 2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/Period</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Predominant Characteristic/Philosophy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post World War II</td>
<td>Small number of international students</td>
<td>Mix of scholarship-supported &amp; funded places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Colombo Plan</td>
<td>Education as Aid Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>Regional focus increased</td>
<td>Education as Aid with regional focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Jackson Report</td>
<td>Education as Export</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Overseas Student Policy</td>
<td>Market-based philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s overall</td>
<td>Redefining of Australia’s place in international HE</td>
<td>Culture of entrepreneurialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act</td>
<td>Protection of overseas students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993 – 1996</td>
<td>University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP)</td>
<td>Improve intercultural understandings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s Overall</td>
<td>Dramatic growth of Australia’s international HE industry</td>
<td>Trade and Internationalisation – Onshore and Offshore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TransNational Education (TNE)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA)</td>
<td>Emphasis on quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early 2000s - Overall</td>
<td>Corporatisation of education</td>
<td>Commodification/Commercialisation of education with higher levels of accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intensification of regulatory environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Evaluation Of The General Skilled Migration Categories</td>
<td>EL Proficiencies of graduating ISs highlighted as concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Revised National Code of Practice</td>
<td>More stringent conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Review of Australian Higher Education Review</td>
<td>Move towards sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>DEEWR Project – The impact of English language proficiency and workplace readiness on the employment outcomes of tertiary international students</td>
<td>EL proficiency investigated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>ESOS Act strengthened</td>
<td>Supporting students &amp; protecting Australia’s reputation for quality education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA)</td>
<td>Increased emphasis on accountability &amp; quality assurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Mid 2000s</td>
<td>Sustainable models</td>
<td>Lesser emphasis on commodification to build more sustainable models</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The development of international education in Australia occurred gradually until the late 1980s, when sudden and dramatic growth occurred. This led to Australia becoming heavily reliant on income from ISs. The global role of international education in
Australia is clearly intertwined with the volume and spread of foreign enrolments, the strong economic character of the industry, the source countries of its international students, and the programs chosen by the students as their course of study (DAE Eduworld Austrade Report, 2015).

The contemporary context needs to be contextualised by the historical development of HE in Australia, the first of which details the HE sector from the post-World War II period, following which the key phases until the late 2000s are discussed.

1950s to 1970s

Prior to the Colombo Plan, there were only a small number of overseas students in Australia; the first students started studying in 1914 (Goldring, 1984). The post-World War II period saw a modest level of international student enrolment with a mix of scholarship-supported places and private places partially funded by the students themselves (except between 1973-1979), but no international student paid the full cost fees and numbers were restricted by quotas (Megarrity, 2005).

The first milestone for international HE was the Colombo Plan, initiated in 1951. Similar to the American Fullbright scholarship, the Colombo Plan was driven by ideologies of nation building and developmentalism. The Colombo Plan provided opportunities for talented students in newly developed countries to acquire advanced technical, scientific and administrative training (Rizvi, 2011). It represented a commitment by richer Commonwealth countries to provide the necessary education for newly independent populations to progress. This aim was reflective of the broader Western political ideology of preventing newly independent countries from falling into the ‘communist bloc’ (Oakman, 2005). As the largest scheme in terms of student numbers, the Colombo Plan has a prominent place in Australian-Asian relations and led to a steady growth in the numbers of ISs in Australia, with 20 000 students being sponsored under it by 1985 (Oakman, 2002).

While the significance of the Colombo Plan cannot be underestimated, lesser schemes with varying degrees of success were also developed. These included the Australia Papua New Guinea Education and Training Scheme, Australian International Awards Scheme, Special Commonwealth African Assistance Plan and the Commonwealth Cooperation Education Scheme. The most important and longest running scheme was
the Australian-Asian Universities Cooperation Scheme (AAUCS) established in 1969, which eventually became the International Development Program (IDP) in 1981, responsible for the increased growth in ISs numbers in future decades.

In the 1970s, mass tertiary education and its funding were consolidated. From the late 1950s-1970s, public policy-makers and educationists built a world class national HE and research sector in Australia. During this period, student numbers grew eight times and doctoral research was established (Marginson, 2008). In the post-World War II period, there were only 10 000 private overseas students in Australian educational institutions. The main objective of these students was to obtain a Western education overseas for the economic and social development of their countries (Back, 1994). The purposes of education were altruistic and related primarily to nation building, as aid was the main purpose of the Australian international HE sector. The Commonwealth government subsidised the cost of the tuition fees from private overseas students who only paid between 10-15% of the total cost of a HE degree.

1980s

The focus on education as aid significantly changed in the 1980s. The changing social and economic circumstances in Australia, due to the collapse in commodity prices in the 1980s, forced Australia to explore other sources of revenue (Marginson, 2011). In addition, the ‘developmentalist’ assumptions governing educational aid no longer seemed appropriate and the transfer of knowledge ideology was seen as a form of colonial practice (Rizvi, 2011).

Financial pressures on universities and a perceptible shift in philosophy led to debates on the future of educational aid programs. Two major reports were commissioned by the Australian government to investigate foreign affairs, overseas trade and the development of Commonwealth aid policies (Marginson, 2004; 2011). These reports highlighted the debate between ‘aid’ and ‘trade’. In 1983, John Goldring chaired the Committee of Review for Private Overseas Student Policy, called for by the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. In 1984, Sir Gordon Jackson chaired a review of the Australian Overseas Aid Programme, commissioned by the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The reports by Goldring and Jackson contained contrasting views. Goldring argued for the continuation of aid and a subsidised education scheme for ISs. In contrast, the Jackson report recommended the introduction of unlimited full-fee paying
places for ISs, outlining the economic benefits for the Australian economy. Similar to the UK, Australia was beginning to recognise the potential of new student mobility discourses and adopted the Goldring recommendations. These recommendations included a progressive subsidy to be increased to 45% of the full cost of a place by 1987, an overall ceiling of 10% of total student numbers and 20% in any one course, with separate quotas for different countries (Goldring, 1984).

The adoption of these recommendations led to a newer educational market discourse which resulted in institutional reforms primarily concerned with generating revenues for universities. International perspectives were integrated into the functions of teaching and research and there was promotion of international activities for the establishment of mutually beneficial relationships. A robust set of market practices was developed to enable HE to become an “export industry” (Rizvi, 2011, p. 3). Marginson asserts that the national decision to adopt the Goldring recommendations “reinvented international education in Australia as a market of institutions in competition for full fee-paying students” (2011, p. 384). The purpose of the Australian government in establishing a commercial international education industry was to improve foreign trade balances, grow Australia’s service areas, especially education, generate income to supplement public university funding, encourage institutions to be more outward and entrepreneurial in their approach and facilitate national responses to globalisation particularly in the Asia-Pacific region (Marginson, 2011).

The opening of universities to trade was part of opening Australia to global competition and enhancing its competitive power (Marginson, 2004). This was facilitated by the earlier Colombo Plan and the relationship established with Asian nations which favourably disposed them to Australian education. Students were initially recruited from Singapore, Malaysia and HK where the influence of Australian HE was considerable.

Further impetus to the growth of international HE was provided by the Dawkins (1987) reforms. The introduction of a system of tuition fees was clearly delineated with a HE Contribution Scheme (HECS) for domestic students and full fees for ISs. The ability to charge full tuition fees for ISs unleashed a new culture of entrepreneurialism, which did not completely reject the previous strategies of aid, although this did take on a new form as Australia redefined the ways in which it could relate to its Asia-Pacific neighbours (Rizvi, 2011). In the context of entrepreneurialism and commercialism, knowledge was
viewed as a commodity and nation development included the building of a set of globally transferable skills (Rizvi, 2011).

Government policies of this period illustrate the gradual transition from aid to trade and the beginnings of a highly regulated policy framework to govern Australia’s international education industry. Initially, the philosophy of aid continued into the 1970s. The Whitlam government abolished tuition fees for all international and domestic students in HE in 1974 (Williams, 1989). Private overseas students were fully subsidised by the Commonwealth government. However, concerned with ‘back-door’ immigration of ISs, the Fraser government (1975-1983) instituted rules related to migration. The Fraser government attempted to introduce more private funding into HE and successfully legislated for an overseas student charge both for economic purposes and to ensure genuine migration (Norton, 2014).

Further changes were introduced in the 1980s. The Overseas Student Charge (OSC), representing a quarter of the average cost of a university degree, was introduced for all private overseas students. The Hawke government set up two review committees as the international education market was beginning to be seriously viewed as an ‘untapped sector’ with great economic potential (Goldring, 1984; Jackson, 1984). The Goldring recommendations were adopted. A new Overseas Student Policy, primarily focussed on encouraging international student market growth, was introduced. The key aspects of this policy were:

- Introduction of full fee-paying international students at publicly funded HE institutions;
- OSC was increased substantially with a phasing out period for subsidised student with a strict quota of 3500 students per annum;
- Rules of entry for overseas students relaxed and migration requirements were streamlined:
  a. Overseas students did not have to prove that the course they proposed to study could not be undertaken in their own country;
  b. Overseas students could study in any course provided they were accepted by a government accredited institution and paid the required fees; and
- No quota for full fee-paying students.

The new policy encouraged international student enrolments through active marketing and recruitment strategies coordinated through the Overseas Student Office (OSO) established in 1985. This office was responsible for policy formulation and the creation of a computerised, statistical database on ISs (Department of Education, 1985; Industry Commission, 1991). The OSO provided registration and approvals to institutions
wanting to market their courses overseas. Educational institutions had to create their own individual markets for full-fee paying private overseas students as they were allowed to retain all of the fees generated from overseas students from 1988 onwards (Megarrity, 2007).

The growth in numbers as a result of this new policy was dramatic. In 1986 there were 2330 full-fee paying students which increased to 44 000 by 1990, with the biggest growth in the English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students (ELICOS) sector. With the government substantially reducing its funding for universities, institutions were encouraged to actively recruit ISs (Burke, 1989).

The dramatic growth in international student numbers brought some adverse consequences. From 1987, the government became aware of the large number of ISs who were overstaying their visas on course completion. It was becoming apparent that many students, particularly from the PRC, were using short-term EL courses as a shorter route or stepping stone for Permanent Residency status (Mazzarol & Soutar, 1999; Nesdale, Simkin, Sang, Burke & Fraser, 1995). The government developed rules to deter ‘back-door’ migration. The specific trends of the 1980s policy framework are indicative of a transition from elite to mass HE (Vidovich, 2002). This was compounded by a decrease in government funding with more centralised Commonwealth control of HE. The ideological shift of the 1980s, where privatisation and corporatisation of HE was becoming more evident, is reflective of a New Right ideology which intensified in the 1990s.

The 1990s

In the 1990s, international HE, stimulated by a deregulated environment and facilitated by government visa policy and the growing culture of entrepreneurialism, reached new heights. Much of the HE international discourse for the next two decades was dominated by both commercialism and an inevitable focus on quality assurance (Rizvi, 2011). The unparalleled growth in international HE enrolments is evidenced by the growth in export earnings. Between 1994 and 2000, there was an increase of 85% in onshore numbers to approximately 153 000 (Curtis & McKenzie, 2002). This growth shows Australia’s recognition of the commercial potential of international HE.
The 1990s was a period of rapid expansion of EL, growing in its status as a global language. Private entrepreneurs, buoyed by the vast commercial potential of EL development, were actively involved in initiatives which led to the mushrooming of private colleges. The objective of expanding cultural horizons was replaced by the attraction of permanent residency and eventually migration. Most private and public colleges/institutions began establishing administrative units with the sole purpose of recruiting students (Megarry, 2007; Rizvi, 2011).

From an altruistic purpose of providing education for nation building, international education in Australia became dominated by a commercial discourse of knowledge and educational services. Institutions began emphasising international student recruitment and marketing; there was disproportionate attention being paid to pastoral concerns (Rizvi, 2011). Kim Beazley’s (Minister for Employment, Education & Training) 1993 HE Budget Statement identified Australia’s international education within the context of quality education which involved training for Australia, international diplomacy and trade relations, and Australia’s economic performance. Beazley acknowledged the commercial benefits of international HE, indicating that international student numbers had increased significantly from 2000 fee paying students in 1986 to 48 000 in 1991. However, the primary concern of the statement was to provide an alternative perspective to the overtly commercial focus of the international HE sector and emphasised the need for Australia to continue its reputation for provision of good education. This supports the quality assurance measures introduced by Prime Minister Baldwin and the introduction of the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act in 1991.

By the end of the 1990s, international education was viewed as a competitive industry complete with its own administrative technology, highly specialised structures and functions. The change in terminology from ‘overseas students’ to ‘internationalisation’ and ‘international’ in the 1990s signalled a move from commercialism to a new level of professionalism. Global operations developed through advertising and marketing campaigns such as international expos, trade-shows and market-oriented conferences. From a concentration on onshore recruitment in Australia, the 1990s introduced TransNational Education (TNE) and the negotiation of complex twinning arrangements between Australia and offshore partners.
The Australian government played a vital role in the growth of its international HE sector (Megarry, 2007; Rizvi, 2011). This was evident in the policy settings which were highly supportive of entrepreneurial activities. Recruitment activities occurred alongside diplomatic missions (Rizvi, 2011). Organisations dedicated to the growth of the international HE sector were set up, such as AEI and AUSTRADE which viewed education in trade terms. Australia’s commitment to the international education sector is apparent from its steering of the OECD where it was able to dictate the dominant discourse of HE in global markets as it was seen as a leader in internationalisation (Rizvi, 2011). In this position, Australia had an influential voice in education policy-making through its involvements in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and OECD. For example, the Australian government participated in the development of a globally agreed set of rules for global trade in educational services through the WTO.

Most important was the nexus forged by the government between education and immigration policies. This was initially due to a skills shortage which encouraged students to link their courses of study to immigration and permanent residence. Immigration initiatives were possible due to forces of globalisation which provided for new forms of transnational connectivity, facilitated strongly by a global knowledge economy.

Australia in the 1990s was a trendsetter in the international HE sector. Along with the UK, policies and practices based on beliefs about the value of international education in a global labour market were developed (Rizvi, 2011). Australia moved towards a broad internationalisation agenda, recognising economic, cultural and social contexts of ISs in Australia. Universities began to include a sociocultural framework into their mission statements and the Australian Vice Chancellors Committee (AVCC) introduced the University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) scheme, between 1993-1996. This scheme involved student exchange placements in Asia to increase mobility, broaden experience and improve social/cultural understandings of staff and students (Olsen, 2008).

The main focus of Commonwealth legislation in this period was the introduction of legislation and regulations which enforced minimum education standards to protect private overseas students from being financially disadvantaged. Baird (2010, p. 31) summarises the accountability-related developments from the 1990s, identifying these
as increasing use of comparative data for accountability, emergence of a national regulatory framework, seeking accountability through external quality assurance, augmented Federal government legislation for accountability, use of incentive scheme and benchmarking and collaboration on good practice. These accountability developments were significant in bringing about change in the Australian HE sector.

The changing landscape of the HE sector within a globalised environment imposed internal and external pressures on governments and institutions forcing them to change, most notably shown in quality assurance regimes that were introduced. The first official quality policy was introduced in 1991. This represented a milestone, as it was the Australian government’s first step towards tightening control over HE institutions. The Quality Assurance (QA) policy, which covered 1991 to 1995, was “constructed as a device to reform the internal management of universities” (Vidovich, 2002, p. 392). During this time the HE Council refined the ministerial text, while the Committee for Quality Assurance in HE (CQAHE) administered the policy from 1993-1995.

The Code of Practice in the Provision of Education to Overseas Students introduced by the AVCC in 1991 covered all Australian HE providers. The Code provided a framework for educational standards and collection of data to gain a greater understanding and improve management of the international education environment. In 1991, the Commonwealth government introduced the first Education Service for Overseas Students (ESOS) (Registration of Providers & Financial Regulation) Act of 1991. Under this act, states and territories were made responsible for ensuring educational standards. All providers of international education had to be registered with the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS), but the registration could only take place with the approval of state and territory governments. States and territories assessed the applications for CRICOS registration based on national minimum standards regarding student welfare, financial viability and other relevant criteria as stipulated by the Commonwealth. The Code provided for financial protection, as all prepaid student fees were protected by Australian law and institutions were legally obligated to guarantee student payments if necessary.

The change from a focus on trade to internationalisation can be seen in the changes to immigration policies. Australia’s original seven visa classes were replaced in 1991 by
two visa classes. This was a discriminatory system where students from gazetted countries with low-overstay rates had their visas processed quickly, while being privileged with easier entry requirements (Shinn, Welch & Bagnall, 1999). Shinn et al. (1999) argued this system was a reflection of Australia attempting to balance the risks of illegal immigration, while at the same time trying to discourage as few students as possible (Industry Commission, 1991). To protect the financial interests of international students, the Overseas Student Assurance Levy (OSTAL) Bill was introduced in 1993. Education providers were required to “maintain trust accounts for prepaid funds, comply with limits on withdrawals and join an industry-run Tuition Assurance Scheme to guarantee that international students received the courses paid for if a provider defaults” (Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability (ARIES), 2001, p. 23).

Overall, QA policy and the legislative environment from early to mid-1990s can be viewed as one of increasing control by the Commonwealth government which was “steering from a distance” (Vidovich, 2002, p. 394). In the 2000s, Australian HE was viewed as a commercial export with the introduction of stricter regulatory and accountability mechanisms. These will be discussed in the next section.

2000s

The discussion in this section relates to the main themes of the international education sector during the 2000s. These relate to the commercialisation or commodification of HE which led to the adoption of a corporate model. The corporate model impacted on HE in a number of ways (Watts, Flanagan & Little, 2005). First, discussions took place around the extent to which educational aims and objectives were compromised by the corporate model. Second, some scholars argued that academics became managers due to corporatisation of education which had the effect of causing student welfare and well-being to be neglected. It was also felt that the infrastructure was insufficient to support the massive growth in IS enrolments in Australian HE (Marginson & Considine, 2000). The link between HE and immigration became pronounced and there was a need for quality assurance. These trends led to a number of reviews and policies being implemented. The need for a sustainable model was recognised and TransNational Education (TNE) became an aspect of the Australian HE framework. These three aspects (the corporate model, HE and immigration, and HE and sustainability) are discussed below.
The Corporate Model

The key characteristics of international HE in the 2000s was massification, marketisation, managerealism and rationalism (Taylor, Ryan, Pearce & Elphinston, 2016). These were major contributors to the commercialisation of universities and a necessary consequence of a market-driven economy that dictated the commodification of education, otherwise known as the corporate model. The corporatised model adopted by HE institutions was a response to the demands of globalisation, made necessary by a decline in government funding (Bradley, 2008; Marginson, 2004). The main purpose of the international HE sector became the attraction of ISs and academics for brain power and for income generation. The key agenda became global rankings and economic competitiveness making the adoption of a corporate model inevitable (Knight, 2013).

The adoption of a corporate model transpired due to the restructuring of the Australian economy from a goods producing economy to a service economy. The corporate model focuses on a managerial approach with measurable inputs and outputs, as opposed to a focus on academic freedom and the pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning (Banks & Olsen, 2008). The “education of international students [is] driven by a frankly commercial and entrepreneurial spirit…a key element of the enterprise culture” (Marginson & Considine, 2000, p. 4). Welch (2012) argues that the Australian internationalisation of HE is representative of Sklair’s (1999) model of global capitalism. Sklair explains that a market discourse has developed in relation to ISs which signifies a transition to logic of economics rather than the intrinsic social good implicit in education. The transition is the consequence of having 4 million ISs in HE from an estimated total of 14 million (Welch, 2005). Ultimately, the massive increase in IS enrolments led to a shift in educational thinking and curricula focus (Welch, 2005).

The massive growth in international HE students and the adoption of a corporate model had significant consequences for Australian HE. The infrastructure of the HE sector was unable to cope with the dramatic growth, particularly in the second phase (2000-2009), where growth outstripped resource investment at the government, community and university levels (Baird, 2010; Buffington, 2008).

The lack of infrastructure was most keenly felt in the academic environment. The entrepreneurial and internationalisation agenda adopted by universities negatively affected academic culture and quality of educational programmes, made worse by
academics being insufficiently prepared or supported to cope with the demands of a multicultural environment (Meiras, 2004; Trounson, 2010). Academics relegated to “managerial professionals”, “support professionals” (Rhoades, 2006, p. 2) or “manager academics” (Deem, 2006, p. 4) had to work with a university where they were increasingly managed, monitored and evaluated (Oancea, 2007). In this environment, universities commonly substituted tenure with contract or casual (teaching only) appointments for academic staff (Welch, 2012). Declining staff-student ratios became common, where students were “assumed to be private beneficiaries” of “education as a commodity, something to be sold, traded and consumed” (Roberts & Peters, 2008, p. 3).

There was an emphasis by senior managers on the need to change structures and processes to be competitive, efficient and effective with devolution of responsibility from the managerial centre to the academic periphery. Academic staff felt increasingly resentful at being made academic managers where the ethos was “do more with less”, leading to the intensification, diversification and fragmentation of academic work (Fitzgerald, 2012, p. 164). As a result of the adoption of a corporate model, policies, processes and protocols for the monitoring of human, physical and financial resources were established.

The 21st century saw a shift of HE institutions into governance. This is a response to challenges such as expansion, diversification, more heterogeneous student bodies, new funding arrangements (both privatisation of sources and performance-based funding), and increased accountability and more globalised and internationalised networks as global markets become more common (Vidovich & Currie, 2011). The establishment of the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) by the Ministerial Council on Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) in March 2000 was a recognition of quality issues in the internationalisation of HE (Baird, 2010). AUQA was an independent not-for-profit organisation with the aim of promoting, auditing and reporting on quality assurance in Australian HE. AUQA operated independent of governments and the HE sector and received funding from the Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers for HE. The establishment of AUQA represented a “hard-nosed approach compared to a previous “softly-softly” approach” (Vidovich, 2002, p. 394) with a focus on audits and strict forfeits for non-compliance. AUQA audits occurred on a cyclical basis with the first round occurring in 2003, using a ‘fitness for purpose’ approach and were completed in 2007. The second round of university audits commenced in 2008.
While the establishment of AUQA was significant, flaws in the audit system were identified in 2005. Identified issues included having little direct means of measuring graduate achievement of standards or learning outcomes, as well as its inability to address questions about the future of HE in a global environment (Slattery, 2008). The Commonwealth government’s *Review of the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000* in 2010 explained that AUQA did not have the capacity to fund major research or support, which made it unable to fulfil its original objectives of reporting on overall academic standards within the Australian sector.

AUQA’s second cycle of audits commenced in 2008, with growing interest about the comparative performance of universities and assurance of provider minimum standards. AUQA conducted a de-facto accreditation of Australian universities against the National Protocols Criteria with a focus on outcomes, benchmarking and standards, as well as internal quality assurance arrangements. The audits were meant to be concluded in 2013 but the agency was replaced by Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) in 2011. TEQSA is discussed later in this section.

The *ESOS Act* (1991) was repealed and replaced by the new *ESOS Act (2000)* which came into force on 4 June 2001, representing landmark legislation for the Australian international HE industry. It included the revised *National Code of Practice 2001* (AEI, 2009). ESOS had three main objectives:

- Provide financial and tuition assurance to overseas students for courses they have already paid for through a consumer protection framework;
- Protect and enhance Australia’s reputation for quality education and training services; and
- Complement Australia’s migration laws by ensuring providers collect and report on information relevant to the administration of student visas (Baird, 2010).

While the Commonwealth government administers the *ESOS Act*, states and territories have a significant role to play in applying the legislation. The requirements under ESOS are additional to other education quality assurance frameworks such as the Australian Quality Training Framework and the National Protocols for HE Approvals Processes (National Protocols). The *ESOS Act* sets out benchmarks for audits and identified weaknesses in the international education industry as a failure to sufficiently protect the rights of the consumer, which could threaten international student welfare and rights.
(Phillips KPA & Lifelong Learning, 2005). There was a need to ensure that course providers were genuine and not just a front for backdoor immigration (Megarrity, 2007). The ESOS Act enhanced protection of all student prepaid fees, but forced all educational providers to join an industry run Tuition Assurance Scheme and to contribute financially to a Commonwealth-initiated ESOS Assurance Fund. This was an additional means of ensuring that fees could be promptly refurbished to students (Ogawa, 2005).

As with most international student HE policies, there was an implicit immigration control as the ESOS Act enforced digitisation of data. This was to be achieved through the requirement for all CRICOS registered education providers to electronically confirm tentative student enrolments via the Provider Registration International Management System (PRISMS). Migration authorities had direct access to student details for visa assessment. All non-attendance and failure to comply with student visa conditions had to be reported through PRISMS.

The ESOS Act and associated legislation (collectively known as ESOS) was strengthened in 2007 with the introduction of a new National Code of Practice. This included stringent conditions and a requirement for a 5-yearly audit of providers’ compliance with the conditions. The ESOS Act was further reviewed in 2010. The main recommendations from this review supported students’ welfare and protected Australia’s reputation for quality education. Baird contends that these recommendations are fundamental to achieving sustainability in the HE international student sector (Baird, 2010).

Bradley and colleagues conducted the Review of Australian Higher Education in 2008. The purpose of this review was to address Australia’s ability to effectively compete in a globalised economy. The review examined the structure, organisation and financing of the sector (Bradley, 2008). The report’s key recommendations focused on the development of a new framework of outcomes and standards, rather than the current fitness-for-purpose approach to quality in HE. The review recommended the establishment of a new regulator responsible for the registration, accreditation course approval, external quality audits, compliance monitoring, and performance monitoring of all HE institutions including universities and private HE institutions (Bradley, 2008).
In response to the *Review of Australian Higher Education*, the Commonwealth government established a national regulator, TEQSA, in 2011 to replace AUQA. TEQSA has the authority to register university and non-university HE providers and monitor quality to ensure standards. It has the authority to impose sanctions on HE institutions for non-compliance. The Commonwealth government also created a national register of all HE providers. A HE standards framework, including provider standards, quality standards, information standards, teaching and learning standards, and research standards was established. The Commonwealth government also established the ‘My University’ website in 2012 to publish institutional performance on academic measures.

TEQSA has the potential to integrate accountability mechanisms for HE including those under the *ESOS Act* and the *Higher Education Support Act* (Baird, 2010). The regulatory approach adopted by TEQSA is standards and risk-based, guided by three regulatory principles – regulatory necessity, reflecting risk and proportionate regulation (TEQSA). The TEQSA Act (2011) has the following objectives:

- provide for national consistency in the regulation of higher education;
- regulate higher education using a standards-based quality framework and principles relating to regulatory necessity, risk and proportionality;
- protect and enhance Australia’s reputation for and international competitiveness in higher education, as well as excellence, diversity and innovation in higher education in Australia;
- encourage and promote a higher education system that is appropriate to meet Australia’s social and economic needs for a highly educated and skilled population;
- protect students undertaking, or proposing to undertake higher education, by requiring the provision of quality higher education and
- ensure that students have access to information relating to higher education in Australia. (TEQSA Annual Report 2016, p. 5).

It is also responsible for administering two pieces of legislation, the *TEQSA Act* (2011) and *ESOS Act* (2000). TEQSA’s legislative framework is derived from these Acts and incorporates the following quality standards: the 2011 HE Standards Framework, the National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students (National Code), the National Standards for Foundation Programs, and the ELICOS National Standards.

Both universities and non-universities in Australia must be registered by TEQSA. The accountability mechanism reflects a strong concern to regulate the HE industry through a constant process of monitoring of quality standards. The considerable evolution of the
HE regulatory system is a reflection of a concern to maintain quality standards and also to protect the rights of ISs.

In addition to the regulatory accountability mechanisms introduced in the 2000s, EL proficiency issues of ISs also began to gain attention. To investigate the issues of EL proficiencies, DEEWR commissioned a report, *The impact of English language proficiency and workplace readiness on the employment outcomes of tertiary international students* in 2009. The impetus for the report arose from concerns of EL proficiency of graduating ISs expressed in the *Evaluation Of The General Skilled Migration Categories* (2006) written by Birrell, Hawthorne and Richardson, more commonly referred to as the Birrell report. The Birrell report (2006) concisely states the relevance of EL proficiency in the Australian HE sector:

> English language proficiency has become an important issue in Australian higher education due in part to a heightened awareness of the role of English language ability in employment outcomes and the role of international graduates in meeting skill shortages in the Australian workforce. There is also an increased recognition within universities of the fundamental nature of language in learning and academic achievement for all students. (Birrell report, 2006, p. 1)

Subsequent to the report, the Good Practice Principles steering committee was reconvened. The steering committee developed the principles it had earlier identified into six standards which are known as the English Language Standards for Higher Education (ELSHE). These standards can be used by TEQSA to assess higher education providers’ performance. The outcomes of the ELSHE project, which include an EL proficiency assessment for all higher education providers, stress the importance of competence in EL.

*Australian HE and Immigration*

While there has always been underlying tensions in the HE industry, these have become more apparent due to the unprecedented growth in the industry. Marginson (2011) identified these tensions as consisting of education and immigration policy; commercial export and health of domestic education and research system; new imperial economic exploitation of Asia and a more holistic engagement based on mutual respect, viewing ISs as consumers and students with comprehensive rights; and national political economy and global public good (Marginson, 2011). The focus of this section is the tension between Australian immigration policy and education as an export.
Government policy and its comprehensive support of HE have been fundamental to the growth of international student numbers, most apparent in the nexus between HE and immigration policy. This is explicit in the Howard Coalition government’s release of the Migration Occupations in Demand List (MODL) which was introduced in 1999 and had the unfortunate consequence of making ISs view education as a means to a migration outcome rather than an appreciation for the intellectual educational journey (Walters, 2011). In early 2000, international graduate students were allowed to remain in Australia and automatically awarded an extra five points if they applied for Permanent Residency status (Spinks, 2016). The education and migration nexus resulted in some providers and their agents being more interested in “selling” a migration outcome in response to the demand from some students to “buy” a migration outcome (Baird, 2010, p. 7). This had quite serious consequences as these ‘student-migrants’ were unable to integrate into the labour market and had a severe lack of EL skills (Birrell, 2006; Birrell, Healy & Kinnaird, 2007; Birrell & Rapson, 2005).

From 2010 there were dramatic shifts in Australia’s immigration policy and regulations. Triggers for these changes included migration-related education sector scams involving education agents and students from South Asia, Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) and other government departments’ concern that the mix of skilled migrants entering Australia following graduation was not optimal due to a lack of EL proficiency, and the proliferation of certain occupations such as cooks and hairdressers (Birrell, Healy & Kinnaird, 2007). Related to this was the underlying intention of DIAC to ensure only genuine students were provided with student visas and to improve the quality of education. Thus, there was an overall reduction in net overseas migration with more restrictions placed on temporary student migration, as more stringent tests were introduced for graduates wanting permanent migration.

Changes in the immigration policy had a direct consequence on international student numbers. Immigration regulation was the single most important force determining the size and character of the Australian sector, as HE has always been related to opportunity for both temporary and permanent migration (Marginson, 2011). An example of an explicit link between legislation and immigration can be seen in the Howard Coalition government’s relaxation of immigration requirements in 1998 for overseas students studying in areas where there was a skills shortage, such as engineering, computing and
accounting. Between 1997 and 2003, IS numbers increased by 15%, a partial result of the more relaxed immigration rules. However, IS numbers declined in 2010, partially due to a series of attacks on Indian students in Melbourne in 2009. Marginson (2011) viewed these attacks as an inadvertent consequence of the official ‘othering’ policy, which is the process of portraying someone as fundamentally different. Welch (2012) had a more measured assessment and saw the attacks as a “mix of inadequate regulation, over-enthusiastic recruitment, too tight a nexus between education and migration and an emphasis on the economic returns as fuels to the problem” (p. 308).

Increasingly, in the late 2000s, ISs seeking permanent residency status were denigrated as ‘back-door’ immigrants. As a consequence, the government sought to weaken the nexus between education and migration. This was most apparent in Julia Gillard’s statement when she was the Federal Minister for Education in 2010, in an interview with Bruce Baird:

We’re saying to international students: Come study in this country; it’s a great place to study. But the purpose of coming here as a student is to engage in study and end up with a qualification, not an immigration pathway. (Gillard, 2010)

The downturn in the international student HE sector from 2009 to 2012 can be partially attributed to the weakening of the education/migration nexus. History has proven the intimate link in the dramatic growth in international student numbers when immigration rules were less stringent.

Sustainability of Australian HE

Distinct from the first half of the 2000s, which was characterised by large growth, the latter half of the era focused more on the need for a sustainable model for a national system of HE. Despite the substantial growth brought to Australia by the corporatised model, various authors considered that this occurred at the expense of effective social governance of the industry, leaving students “at risk in terms of their social rights for protection” (Deumert, Marginson, Nyland, Ramia & Sawir, 2005, p. 330), as evident in the attacks on the Indian students. As noted by Welch, the “adoption of an opportunistic entrepreneurialism” (2012, p. 330) has the capacity to damage the quality and reputation of both systems and institutions of HE and provide poor service to students. In response to these concerns, in 2009 the Commonwealth government announced a Commonwealth Inquiry into the international education industry and a review of the ESOS Act and the National Code of Practice.
The Review of Australian Higher Education in 2008 (Bradley, 2008) highlighted the need for a sustainable HE model to enable long-term growth and to re-establish Australia as the provider of quality education able to cater to the academic and social needs of students. The review recommended that the focus of Australian HE should be on sustainability and that there was “a need to move to what is being called a “3rd phase” of internationalisation characterised by a more holistic approach” (p. 87). The Review of Australian Higher Education was key to the legislative changes which took place in Australian HE from 2011. Australia’s commitment to international students is evident in a recent document, National Strategy for International Education 2025 (2016). The intention of the document is to ensure Australian international education both assists and meets expectations of students, communities and industries. The document also identifies three pillars, each with specific goals and action items. While the document spans Australian international education at all levels from primary to higher education, including the VET sector, it is the focus on quality assurance mechanisms that is of most relevance to the current study. In pillar one, Strengthening the Fundamentals, the goal is to provide effective quality assurance and regulation through the maintaining of strong quality assurance systems and ensuring strong student protection. These goals are the main focus of the ESOS Act, 2000.

The HE sector is currently undergoing an identity crisis as institutions address whether the economic rationale has overtaken the academic and social-cultural values and benefits of international education (Knight, 2011). While HE has to continue to be “proactive, responsive and innovative” (Knight, 2013, p. 6), there must also be a reorientation of values in favour of academic values as internationalisation should face “genuine cultural exchange based on values and reciprocity and mutuality” (Welch, 2012, p. 310).

Summary of HE – Australian Context
From the overview of the legislative environment which governs ISs, three key phases with their unique features can be discerned. The first, between the 1970s to 1983, emphasised the prevention of unwanted student migration while also subsiding private overseas students for the purposes of diplomatic relations. From 1984 to 1990, there was a desire to create a relatively unregulated international education market in order to improve the position of the Australian economy and HE institutions having to operate in the context of decreasing public funding. The 1990s period and beyond saw the
Commonwealth government becoming increasingly interventionist, both through constant audits and reviews and through legislation which demanded greater accountability for HE institutions. The underlying purpose of this period was a desire to protect and enhance Australia’s reputation as an educational provider and to control immigration.

The development of the Australian HE sector mirrors both the worldwide context and elements peculiar to the Australian environment, such as the active courting of ISs and the nexus between education and migration policies. The Commonwealth government’s role in facilitating the growth of the HE export industry cannot be underestimated.

Summary of context and Australian HE regulatory environment

Figure 2.5 presents a summary of the contextual information that has been presented in this chapter. The current study is situated within the broader concepts of globalisation and internationalisation which is the overall framework in which a study on ISs needs to be contextualised. The twin phenomena of globalisation and internationalisation enable understandings of the overall framework of the current study as it provides the context for the growth in IS enrolments. The information on the regulatory environment is key to understanding the context and evolution of international HE in Australia as the regulatory framework developed in a parallel fashion to the dramatic growth in ISs to address concerns peculiar to this cohort of students. Figure 2.5 highlights the Australian regulatory environment and how this has influenced various policies and reports across the 1980s, 1990s and into the 2000s.
Figure 2.5: Summary of context and Australian HE regulatory environment

[Diagram showing various regulatory elements and their relationships]
Conclusion

This chapter provided the background and contextual knowledge for this study. The chapter began by providing a definition of two key terms: globalisation and internationalisation. The first section explained the relationship between the complex, contested phenomenon of globalisation and the internationalisation of HE. The effect of globalisation in making the knowledge and culture industry internationally competitive, operating in an environment of competition, was recognised.

The second section of this chapter traced the development of the international HE sector in Australia as it moved from a focus on aid to trade to internationalisation, while highlighting the consequences of adopting a corporate model. The overview illustrated the growth in the industry showing significant statistical increases in HE over the decades. Each time period was influenced by a specific philosophy and Commonwealth government policy, particularly the interconnections between the HE industry and migration policies.

The next chapter, Chapter 3, presents conceptual information for this study by presenting a literature review on international students’ academic adjustment with a focus on culture, English Language (EL) proficiency, ISs’ motivations and gender.
CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW: INFLUENCES ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS’ ADAPTATION AND ADJUSTMENT

Introduction
This chapter presents an overview of research in the area of ISs’ academic adaptation and adjustment with a focus on culture, EL proficiency, motivations and gender. The chapter begins by providing insights into cross-cultural models pertaining to ISs’ adjustments to the host culture. Positioning theory and the importance of personal agency in the context of ISs is then discussed which form the backbone of the conceptual framework of the current study. Biggs’ 3P Model of Student Learning is presented to describe a prevalent learning model (Biggs, 1996) after which the interconnections between language, culture and thought are discussed. The chapter then provides an overview of studies relating to ISs’ EL proficiencies. A brief review of research on postgraduate students is also presented. The role of motivation, with particular emphasis on self-regulated learning and self-determination theory is discussed prior to explaining the role of learning goals for achievement of ISs. The chapter concludes with reviews of studies relating to gender differences in academic achievement.

Cross-Cultural Models of Adaptation and Adjustment
Chapter One defined ISs’ adjustment as the process through which sojourners adapt to a new culture, and highlighted the academic, sociocultural and psychological aspects of this process (Ward & Kennedy, 1993). This section provides an overview of some of the dominant cross-cultural models in the IS adjustment literature. The section begins with a description of Lewthwaite’s (1996) review of cross-cultural literature. The Affect, Behaviour, Cognition (ABC) (Ward, 2001) model is then presented, before moving on to a discussion on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Berry’s (1989; 1997; 2004; 2005) four acculturation strategies are also described. The section concludes with a brief overview of studies which highlight the interconnections between language, culture and thought.

Lewthwaite’s Review of Cross-Cultural Adjustment Literature
The issue of ISs’ adjustments and its implications for HE have been studied since the 1950s. ISs arriving in Australia for tertiary education encounter more challenges and
difficulties with adaptation to the tertiary context than the average Australian student (Andrade, 2006; Ashton-Hay, Wignell & Evans, 2016; Ryan & Carroll, 2005; Sawir, Marginson, Forbes-Mewett, Nyland & Ramia, 2012; Zhang & Brunton, 2007). This is intensified if the student comes from a culture significantly different to that in Australia (Ballard & Clanchy, 1984, 1991; Brinkmann, 2010; Burke, 1986; Gao & Watkins, 2002; Li, 2003; Ward, 2013; Watkins & Biggs, 2001).

Lewthwaite (1996) identified four broad models in the cross-cultural literature. The first two consist of models relating to the U-shaped curve model and the classic arithmetical learning curve. The latter two models present cultural adaptation as a dynamic, cyclical process. Lewthwaite’s (1996) cross-cultural literature relates primarily to sojourners but can be related to ISs who are transient entrants into a new culture. Lewthwaite’s categorisation of the cross-cultural literature is still used as a basis for contemporary cross-cultural studies.

The dominant cross-cultural adaptation model is the U-shaped curve (Lysgaard, 1955), which has been used to explain culture shock issues for the last 30 years. The initial honeymoon high is followed by a bottoming out due to cultural maladjustment, finally leading to a climb towards cultural acceptance and adaptation (Lewthaite, 1996). Adler (1975; 1987) emphasised the personality or identity crisis resulting from being in an unfamiliar environment as a necessary impetus for both personality development and personal growth. Thus, individuals construct an integrated and transcultural self, effectively creating another identity which of necessity is one of transience (Ryan, 2011; Simpson, Sturges & Weight, 2010).

In the second model of cross-cultural adjustment, adaptation is viewed as a learning process and plotted as a classic arithmetical learning curve, in contrast to the earlier U-curve model. This model makes allowance for the sojourner to experience shocks in learning the new culture, viewed as a precondition for learning; thus, there is a positive correlation between the shocks experienced in the new culture and adaptation (Lewthwaite, 1996). The focus in this model is on intercultural communication which is seen as the essence of cultural adaptation, involving learning and using appropriate behaviours (Lewthwaite, 1996).
The third model combines elements from the first two models, where cultural adaptation is seen as a process of learning and recovery. ISs in this context are typified as being on a psychological journey moving from the “periphery of a culture to the centre”, gradually progressing from feeling resentful to becoming more understanding and empathetic (Lewthwaite, 1996, p. 169).

The final model of cross-cultural adjustment views adaptation as a dynamic and cyclical process of tension reduction in order to achieve equilibrium; thus providing a homeostatic mechanism for cross-cultural study (Lewthwaite, 1996). In this context, ISs are in a state of disequilibrium due to the numerous upheavals and disruptions they experience in being confronted with an unfamiliar culture. Therefore, ISs experience internal imbalance, which they attempt to reduce through a process of adaptation.

Lewthwaite’s four models highlight the evolution of cross-cultural literature which indicates the complexity of adjusting to a new culture. Adjustment is a constant process of learning as ISs negotiate meaning in the new cultural context.

**ABCs (Affect, Behaviour, Cognition) of Acculturation**

Ward (2001, p. 434) defines acculturation as “changes resulting from sustained first-hand contact with members of other cultural groups”. Although acculturation occurs amongst a wide range of individuals, Ward (2001) confined the ABC model to three groups of cross-cultural travellers: sojourners, immigrants and refugees. In adjustment and adaptation literature, ISs as temporary entrants to a new culture are often referred to as sojourners (Hechanova-Alampa, Beehr, Christiansen & van Horn, 2002).

Within acculturation literature three contemporary theoretical approaches can be discerned – social identification, culture learning, and stress and coping. This is based on Ward’s (2001) seminal work on the review of acculturation literature. These three approaches have their theoretical underpinnings in mainstream social and health psychology but have been specifically applied to acculturation (Ward, 2001). Social identification theories focus on perceptions that individuals have of themselves as well as others, including the processing of information about their own groups (in-groups) and that of others (out-groups). These theories stress the cognitive aspect of cross-cultural learning (Ward, 2001). Culture learning theories emphasise the social psychology involved in the intercultural learning required of acculturating individuals.
This group of theories, primarily highlighting behavioural aspects, focus on the processes involved in learning culturally specific skills for survival in a new culture. Finally, psychological stress and coping models, which emphasise the affective component, have been applied to cross-cultural transition and adaptation. These models explain that psychological adjustment is influenced by life-changing events, personality and social support variables. Ward (2001) synthesised the three approaches into the ABC model of culture contact.

Ward’s (2001) model is a comprehensive synthesis of theoretical work and empirical research on adaptation issues, based on previous analytical frameworks. These include the three-factor model produced by Hammer, Gudykunst and Wiseman (1978) to explain intercultural effectiveness; Mendenhall and Oddou’s (1985) discussion of affective, behavioural and cognitive components in adaptation; empirical research by Kealey (1989) which highlighted positive and negative psychological outcomes in relation to cross-cultural understandings; Black and Stephens (1989) behavioral approach to sojourner adjustment; and works on domain-specific adjustment such as work performance and satisfaction (Lance & Richardson, 1988), economic adaptation (Aycan & Berry, 1996), and academic achievement and adjustment to school (Lese & Robbins, 1994). The works identified recognise the importance of psychological well-being and relationships with members of the new culture as important components for cross-cultural adaptation. Based on these works, Ward and colleagues argued that intercultural adaptation can be divided into psychological and sociocultural categories (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1992; 1993). Psychological adjustment is based on affective responses and refers to “feelings of well-being or satisfaction during cross-cultural transitions”, while sociocultural adaptation refers to “the ability to “fit in” or execute effective interactions in a new cultural milieu” (Ward, 2001, p. 414). Ward’s ABC model is reproduced in Figure 3.1.
Figure 3.1: The ABC Model of ‘Culture Shock’ (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001, p. 271)

The ABC model explains how the three components (psychological, socio-cultural and cognitive) merge to explain cross-cultural transition and adaptation. The affect component of stress and coping theories highlights the processes involved in cultural change which lead to affective outcomes. The second major component, behaviour, highlights the processes involved in acquiring specific skills for sociocultural adjustment. Cognition, concerned with processes of identity development, is instrumental in highlighting a fundamental change as “identity entails a set of dynamic, complex processes by which individuals define, redefine, and construct their own and others’ ethnicity or culture” (Ward et al., 2001, p. 275). Ward et al. (2001) explained that at the most basic level, individuals identify themselves with their ethnic group incorporating elements of ethnic or cultural identity which relate to feelings of belongingness (how much one feels part of a particular group), centrality (how important one’s group membership is for personal identity), evaluation (positive and negative perceptions of one’s group) and tradition (the practice of cultural customs and the acceptance of the group’s long-standing traditional norms and values). Ward et al. (2001) argue that identity and acculturation are linked and predictors of sojourner/migrant adaptation to the new environment, especially in relation to psychological and sociocultural adjustment.
Social Identity Theory

Tajfel and Turner’s (1979) psychological theory of social identity, originally developed to study intergroup discrimination, is relevant to studies on acculturation, adaptation and adjustments. Tajfel and Turner (1979) identified individuals as having multiple selves in relation to group memberships where different social contexts trigger different responses based on the individual’s perception of self on a personal, family or national level, referred to as self-categorisation (Turner, Oakes, Haslam & McGarthy, 1994). Turner et al. defined self-categories as cognitive “groupings of self and some class of stimuli as identical and different from some other class” (1994, p. 3). Therefore, individuals perceive themselves as having certain commonalities with some groups but being different from others, relating to the definition of “us” and associated with “internalised group membership” (Vaughan & Hogg, 2014, p. 231). Self-categorisation is important in defining individuals as unique based on their differences from others.

In this theory, groups are referred to as ‘in-groups’ where individuals perceive membership based on similarities or ‘out-groups’ which are groups that individuals do not identify with. Based on their research, Turner et al. (1994) described social identity as

social categorisations of self and others which define the individual in terms of his or her shared similarities with members of certain social categories in contrast to other social categories. Social identity, therefore, refers to the shared social categorical self (“us” versus “them”, in group versus outgroup). (Turner et al., 1994, p. 3)

Social identity is the part of the individual’s self-identity which is derived from knowledge and membership to particular groups, “together with the value and significance of that membership” (Tajfel, 1981, p. 255). Tajfel and Turner’s (1979) broad based study focused on intergroup behaviours and biases but has relevance to acculturation and adjustment studies as sojourners can be categorised as out-group members seeking membership into the in-group (host society) through the development of appropriate strategies. Ward (2001) postulates that social identity theory can be used to explain in-group favouritism and the responses of minority groups such as sojourners when confronted with biasness in intercultural encounters. However, research in this area is limited, with mixed outcomes (Ward, 2001). Further studies are required to examine the social identification of sojourners in the process of adjusting to a different culture.
Four Acculturation Strategies
Berry (1989; 1997; 2004; 2005) proposed an acculturation model that identified four dimensions of acculturation attitudes for sojourners – assimilation, separation, integration and marginalisation. Individuals practice the assimilation strategy when they do not wish to maintain their own cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures. Assimilationists experience significant behavioural changes as they develop completely new behaviours to assimilate into the new culture. In contrast, the separation strategy is apparent when individuals place more value on their original culture and avoid interactions with other cultures. As separating individuals are focussed on cultural maintenance, few behavioural changes occur when this strategy is practiced. Integration is practiced when individuals indicate interest in maintaining their original culture but also place value on daily interactions with others. With the integration strategy, aspects of cultural integrity are maintained but there is also a strong desire to seek membership of a larger, evolving social network. Individuals practicing integration use new behaviours from the larger society while retaining instrumental aspects of their original cultural identity. Thus, integration is the least stressful strategy, so long as it is supported by the wider host society. Marginalisation describes individuals who have little interest in maintaining their own cultural identity or in having interactions with others. Marginalisation, identified as the most stressful strategy, is often associated with major heritage cultural loss and can lead to the existence of deviant behaviours (Berry, 2005; 2008).

The four acculturation strategies and the level of identification with the host and heritage culture are summarised in Table 3.1. The integration strategy (top left in Table 3.1) has a high level of identification with both the heritage and host cultures. Assimilation (top right) has a high level of identification with the host culture but a low level with the heritage culture. The separation strategy (bottom left) has a high level of identification with the heritage culture and a low level with the host culture. Marginalisation (bottom right) has a low level of identification with both the heritage and host cultures. Individuals practice each of the four acculturation strategies differently based on their personal context. While integration appears to be the ideal strategy, in that it incorporates both the heritage and host cultures, sojourners are influenced by their personal context in the approaches they develop in the new cultural environment.
Table 3.1: Acculturation Strategies and Level of Identification with Heritage and Host Culture (adapted from Berry, 2005, p. 705)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identification with host culture</th>
<th>Identification with heritage culture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>LOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification with host culture</td>
<td>Integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification with host culture</td>
<td>Separation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW</td>
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</table>

The literature reviewed in this section on cross-cultural adaptation and adjustment illustrates several points. First, the process of cross-cultural adaptation is complex. Second, it is important to obtain insights into the adjustments and adaptations of ISs. Third, cross-cultural literature borrows theories from other disciplines, such as cognitive psychology, and is moving towards discursive discussions of ISs’ adaptation and adjustment, the fundamental basis of the approach adopted in the current study. The next section reviews various studies related specifically to adjustments of ISs.

**Review of Adjustment Literature**

In this section, empirical studies which identify adjustment issues will be reviewed. These studies explore the challenges encountered by ISs in adjusting to the host culture and highlight that the nature of research into ISs has been largely homogenous.

Barker (1993) postulates that cross-cultural adaptation leads to successful adjustment within a social learning context when the individual develops culture-specific skills and is able to negotiate the host culture through knowledge about the new culture, regular contact with host nationals, duration of residence and the creation of a new cultural identity. However, the process of doing so is challenging for ISs who encounter difficulties as shown in the literature. For example, a connection between adjustment and academic performance has been found with poor adjustment resulting in less than satisfactory academic achievement (Ballard, 1987; Gilbert, 2000). ISs experience difficulties with adjusting to academic expectations and negotiating different learning styles and roles, in addition to negotiating a new role with their tutors/lecturers (Ballard, 1987; Burns, 1991; Gilbert, 2000). According to Gilbert, “[s]tudents who do not have the language, literacy and learning experience required for managing in the very typical
higher educational environment espoused by UK universities face critical barriers to success on their chosen programme” (2000, p. 56). Due to differences in attitudes towards knowledge, expectations of learning and student-tutor relationship, ISs face pressures of academic adjustment.

Differences in the power distance between home and host cultures may explain the challenges faced by ISs. Spencer-Oatey (1997) investigated students and tutors conceptions of unequal relationships in high-power distance (Chinese) and low-power distance (British) societies. The study involved interviewing 166 British and 168 Chinese tutors and postgraduates, of which nine were academics with experience in both British and Chinese academic environments. The study used the main components of Hofstede’s (1986) study which included Individualism, Masculinity, Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance. The underlying theoretical assumption of the study was that “power and distance closeness” may actually be more compatible in “Asian high power-distance societies than in Western low power-distance societies”, which led Spencer-Oatey to the belief that “unequal relationships in Asian societies may even be closer than those in Western societies” (1997, p. 286). Spencer-Oatey’s (1997) study found substantial differences in the British and Chinese conceptions of the tutor-postgraduate student relationship which supported her hypothesis that these differences are linked to cultural values of power-distance. The Chinese respondents judged the role relationship to be closer with a greater power differential. The British respondents questioned the legitimacy of the power differential. While Spencer-Oatey (1997) acknowledged that her study did not examine the distance/closeness interrelationship with power-distance, she argued that benevolence has been shown to be an important feature of Asian leadership styles. Research examining the preferred leadership styles of the Taiwanese found that the “Chinese prefer an authoritarian leadership style in which a benevolent and respected leader is not only considerate of his followers, but also able to take skilled and decisive action” (Bond & Hwang cited in Spencer-Oatey, 1997, p. 286). Spencer-Oatey supports the view that concepts of power are positively associated with benevolence, nurturance, and supportiveness in Asia. In contrast, concepts of power in the West are often negatively associated with authoritarianism and domination.

Studies have examined different aspects of adjustment to host cultures. Tsang’s (2001) quantitative study utilising a survey questionnaire examined the adjustment of mainland
Chinese ISs (220) and Chinese academics (91) in a Singaporean university. The study used the adjustment framework developed by Black and colleagues (Black, 1988, 1990; Black, Mendenhall & Gregersen, 1992; Black & Stephens, 1989) which identified three facets to the degree of international adjustment: adjustment to work, adjustment to interacting with host-country nationals, and adjustment to the general environment of the host country (Tsang, 2001, p. 349). Tsang’s (2001) model of international adjustment examined the effects of seven personal characteristics: prior international experience, pre-departure knowledge, language competence, self-efficacy, extroversion, association with locals, and social support on adjustment to host cultures. The findings of the study showed that with the exception of prior international experience, the other six factors significantly affected general and/or interactional adjustment, especially for the academics. Language competence played a more important role in adjustment for the academics than the students. Tsang (2001) found that while interaction adjustment had greater influence on performance than general adjustment for academics, only general adjustment had an influence on performance for the students. Tsang (2001) contends that this finding is not surprising given the different roles of academics and students. Findings from the study indicated that mainland Chinese ISs preferred to spend time on their studies rather than socialising with local students, which was seen as an obstruction to achieving good results. This indicates the achievement-oriented nature of CHC students.

ISs have adjustment issues ranging from differences in teaching and learning styles to different levels of bureaucracy, in addition to issues of culture shock, homesickness and lack of social support and friendship networks (Furnham, 1997). Alhazmi and Nyland (2013) examined the dialectical relationships between participants’ cultural identity and their acculturation experiences. The Australian phenomenological study focussed on the transitioning experiences of five Saudi international students through in-depth interviews. The findings indicated that the participants responded differently to the changes from a gender-segregated to mixed-gender environment. In particular, cultural identity construction was of particular significance in the acculturation of ISs.

Kashima and Loh’s (2006) quantitative study on Asian students’ acculturation to Australia involved 100 participants recruited from universities across the Melbourne metropolitan area. The participants were from a variety of Asian countries including Singapore, China, HK and India. The study examined the personal ties of students to
other international students, conational students and Australian students. The findings of the study showed that adjusting to a new culture was unsettling and stressful for sojourners, which was alleviated by personal ties either with locals or other ISs. The study also concluded that ISs’ social identities change dynamically during the period of acculturation. Although limited by the homogenous nature of the study, the findings on the dynamic construction of identity is of relevance to the current study.

Trice (2004) conducted a quantitative study of 497 international graduate students and their social patterns at an American research university. The study involved a diverse range of Asian and Caucasian participants from different countries. 38% of the participants were from East Asia (China, Korea, Japan), 11% from South East Asia (Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand), 9% from South Asia (India, Pakistan), 13% Western Europeans, 6% Eastern Europeans, 10% Latin Americans, 6% Middle Easterners, 4% Canadians, 2% Oceanians (Australia and New Zealand) and 2% Africans. Data for the study was collected through a survey. The author found that students who socialised with Americans were comfortable in American culture, socialised with other ISs, and participated in the cultural life of the university. The findings of the study indicate that successful social adjustment is enhanced when ISs form friendship networks with local students in the host culture. Like Kashima and Loh’s study, Trice treated the ISs as one homogeneous group.

Cultural adaptation is key to successful academic adjustment. Tomich, McWhirter and King (2000) noted that the most important variables in successful adjustment were command of language and prior contact with the host country. Similarly, Furnham and Bochner (1986) measured three levels of cultural factors (similar, intermediate, dissimilar) in their British study. Their findings showed that ISs with a higher degree of commonality had better adjustment experiences. For example, Europeans acculturated better to life in Britain than their Middle Eastern or Asian counterparts. These findings are reflected in Ward and Kennedy’s (1993) comparative study on Chinese ISs studying in New Zealand, who had more adjustment issues compared to Chinese ISs studying in Singapore.

Foster’s (2012) quantitative study on the academic performance of ISs (referred to as students from a Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) in the study) and domestic Australian students in Australian HE classrooms provided a comparative perspective.
The data for the study was obtained from a multi-institutional panel data set on Australian students (numbers not stated) enrolled in undergraduate programs in the business schools of two ATN universities. Based on the quantitative data obtained from the university databases, the study found that ISs’ academic performance lagged behind those of other students in tutorials with those ISs from English speaking backgrounds earning higher marks. Foster concluded that the cultural factor such as lack of academic cultural knowledge played a significant role in shaping the learning context for ISs. Foster argues that lack of cultural knowledge was more significant than lack of EL proficiency. The study questioned the appropriateness of attributing ISs poor academic performance to EL issues, as other cultural influences appeared to be just as significant. This finding is significant and challenges studies that attribute ISs’ adjustment difficulties solely to EL issues. This study also treated ISs as a homogeneous group, making the assumption that all cultures are similar, de-emphasising the influence and role of ISs cultural background.

Khawaja and Stallman’s (2011) homogeneous study of 22 ISs in four focus groups and the challenges they faced, the resilient coping strategies they employed and their advice for future ISs provides insight into the sociocultural issues faced by ISs. The study highlighted challenges for ISs including adjustment, social isolation, EL skills, academic difficulties, unmet expectations, employment, culture shock and psychological distress. This study highlights that a wide range of challenges are encountered by ISs in adjusting to the host culture.

The complexity of cross-cultural issues needs further discussion and study, especially as individual adaptation strategies and cognitive factors have been ignored, although gaps in cultural and linguistic knowledge have been identified (Lewthwaite, 1996). Previous research has adopted an ethnocentric approach and was based on a deficit model, particularly in the descriptions of ISs adjustment issues and study styles (Volet & Renshaw, 1996). Volet and Ang caution against using the “culture construct as a simple explanation without exploring its components” (1998, p. 8). Similarly, Biggs (2003) highlights that deficit models focus on ISs lack of knowledge and skills to work in a different setting, which can cause students to feel patronised as the focus appears to be on assimilation (Macdonald & Gunn, 1997). Tran (2017) provides a novel perspective on ISs’ adjustments, highlighting ISs’ ability to transform themselves through mobility
as they endeavour to deal with the different challenges they are presented with in the host environment by exercising different forms of agency.

Summary

The models and empirical contributions reviewed here indicate the complexity of cross-cultural adjustment, highlighting that a simplistic focus on one-dimension of the concept is likely to be inappropriate. The literature reviewed indicates studies have generally investigated ISs as homogeneous groups (for e.g Foster, 2012; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011). Studies reviewed in this section indicate the varied challenges facing ISs. Both lack of cultural knowledge and limitations of EL issues have been highlighted as significant influences affecting ISs’ adjustments. Viewing ISs as a heterogeneous group is necessary as cultural distance varies between different cultural groups (Volet & Ang, 1998). The current study investigates ISs’ adjustment from the perspective of two cultural groups: APC and CHC learners. The current study also examines issues of adjustment from a multi-dimensional perspective as it examines the influences of culture, motivations and EL proficiency on ISs’ adjustments.

Language, Culture and Thought

Language, culture and thought and the interconnections between them provide insights into understanding human cognition. The interconnections between language, culture and thought have their origins in the work of German philosophers Herder (1770s), Humboldt (1830s) and Heidegger (1920s). Despite being separated by centuries, these three philosophers held the common view that language shaped thoughts and was not just a communicative tool. Therefore, language based on worldviews was instrumental in constructing knowledge. These ideas dominated the anthropological fieldwork conducted by Boas (1938), Malinowski (1923; 1946) and Whorf (1940; 1956 cited in Whorf, 2012) with small, homogeneous cultures prior to the advent of research in applied linguistics.

Based on their fieldwork, Sapir and Whorf formulated the relation between language, culture and thought, conveyed in the idea of linguistic relativity (Kramsch, 2008). The Whorfian hypothesis, in the tradition of cognitive psychology, focussed on segmented aspects of language such as particular lexical or grammatical categories of perception, categorisation and knowledge representation (Imai, Kanero & Masuda, 2016). The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis “posited the constructivist relation of language and thought and
the mutual dependency of linguistic forms and cultural worldviews” (Kramsch, 2008, p. 305). These studies foregrounded the role of the sociocultural component in cognitive development. In linguistics, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis referred to the idea that certain thoughts of individuals in one language cannot be interpreted by those who live in another language, as the way individuals think is significantly affected by their native languages.

Work by Kaplan in the 1970s echoed the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Kaplan (1972; 1987) argued that part of learning a language is mastery of its logical system and that “the acquisition of a second language really requires the simultaneous acquisition of a whole new universe and a whole new way of looking at it” (1972, p. 100). Kaplan’s views of cultural determinism implied that each language only has one national culture as he linked cultural differences to the structure of the language itself (Kramsch, 2008).

Kramsch (2008) offers a dynamic view of language, thought and culture. Instead of viewing language and culture as static concepts and adopting linguistically deterministic perspectives, Kramsch argues for “a situated, spatially and temporally anchored, co-construction of meaning between teachers and learners who each carry with them their own history of experience with language and communication” (Kramsch, 2008, p. 311). Kramsch (2008) explains the importance of language relativity in enabling understanding of how speakers of other languages think and what they value, but emphasises that these understandings are not a precursor for moral relativism which imposes values of the dominant language.

Researchers have examined the influence of culture on language (Medin, Ojalehto, Marin & Bang, 2013) and concluded that culture-specific modes of thinking can play an important role on cognitive processes and knowledge representation independent of each other (Imai, Kanero & Masuda, 2016). The view that culture and language are simultaneously linked and arise from adaptation to the environment is gaining ground. However, research in this area has to be further developed, especially around theories which explain the preservation and resilience of cultural and language components in the process of adapting to new cultures.

In the context of ISs, the dynamism of culture and language in thought formulation is especially relevant in developing understandings of adjustments to host cultures. Post-
modernist perspectives which indicate a clear connection between language and the representation of social reality (Wood & Kroger, 2000) suggest a discursive approach to ISs’ adjustment processes is more appropriate and relevant. For example, Danielewicz argues that “identities are produced through participation in discourse”, which is manifested through language, and “consists of a system of beliefs, attitudes and values that exist within particular social and cultural practices” (2001, p. 11). Culture is constantly evolving, changing and conflictual. Thus, the relationship between language, culture and thought in identity formation and development is relevant to the study of ISs’ adjustments.

**Role of Positioning Theory and Personal Agency in Identity Construction**

The dynamism and evolutionary nature of identity construction provides a strong foundation to understand the adjustment processes of ISs. Literature on ISs’ adjustment and adaptation has evolved from culturally deterministic views to nuanced understandings of ISs who are actively engaged, agentic individuals and decision-makers, developing strategies in order to navigate the demands of the host academic and sociocultural environment. This section begins by providing definitions of the three key concepts of positioning, personal agency and identity construction. Each of the three concepts is individually explained and relevant empirical research cited to illustrate the prevalence of these constructs in ISs’ adjustment processes.

Singh and Doherty (2008) articulate the idea that privileging of Western academic discourse places the onus on ISs to adapt by way of participating in academic preparation programs. Such programs aim to teach ISs the necessary know-how to understand “how the west is done” (Singh & Doherty, 2008, p. 2). These authors question the formulation of programs which in effect impose a certain identity on ISs, instead of allowing ISs to develop their own identity. Singh and Doherty believe a nuanced understanding of ISs is required to ensure that Western discourse is not privileged. Similarly, Tran (2008) questions the dominant belief that the onus is on ISs to adapt to the new host culture. Instead, she argues that domestic students and academic staff have to mutually adapt along with ISs and that more nuanced understandings of ISs and the dynamic construction of their identity should be recognised. In this context, it is necessary to understand positioning theory, personal agency and dynamism of identity development to understand the processes of ISs’ adjustment to the host culture.
Positioning Theory

Positioning theory examines the interconnections between social reality and identity and power (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré and Moghaddam, 2003; van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). Harré and Moghaddam (2003) argue that in interactions, individuals can either position themselves or others in positions of power or resistance. Positioning theory highlights the dynamism and changeable aspects of social life which can be created through discourses.

Positioning theory, based on social constructionism, emerged in the 1980s, primarily in the field of gender studies (Slocum & Van Langenhove, 2003) with the work of psychologist Hollway who examined the negotiation of gender-related places in conversation (Hollway, 1984). However, the actual founders of positioning theory are social psychologists Potter and Wetherell, psychologists Harré and Davies, and sociologist Van Langenhove. These researchers shared a social-constructionist approach arguing that communication shapes identity (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006). Positioning theory relates to the use of discourse in interactions where individuals can position and reposition themselves either deliberately or unintentionally. In every social setting, multiple positions exist that “people can adopt, strive to locate themselves in, be pushed into, be displaced from or be refused access” (Harré & Moghaddam, 2003, p. 6). Positioning theory is “based on the principle that not everyone involved in a social episode has equal access to rights and duties to perform particular kinds of meaningful actions at that moment and with those people” (Harré, 2012, p. 193).

A central tenet of positioning theory is the notion of personal agency which relates to how individuals make choices in discourses. Simply put, positioning theory examines how individuals locate themselves (reflexive) or others (interactive) through talk (Davies & Harré, 1990). The theory is concerned with discursive practices and the dominant aspects of discourse such as rules and conventions, rights, duties and obligations in discursive practices (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999). Individual agency operates within a social structure. As social reality is dynamic and changeable, individuals can either choose to take up or be forced into particular discourses (Brinkmann, 2010). Positioning theory can be seen as “dynamic, evanescent and mutually constitutive” (Gu, Patkin & Kirkpatrick, 2014, p. 139).
Positioning theory has been used in studies examining ISs’ adjustments. Tran’s (2007) qualitative study with eight international Chinese and Vietnamese students and four academics at an Australian university utilised a modified version of Lillis’ (2001) heuristic and positioning theory (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999) to interpret the adaptation of academic writing practices of students and academics. Based on data obtained from the participants’ accounts of writing, three main forms of positioning were identified: self-positioning, forced self-positioning and positioning of others. Personal agency in achieving personal goals is the key aspect of “self-positioning”, while forced self-positioning related to the ways that students position themselves based on what they think is expected of them by lecturers or subject disciplines. Finally, intentional positioning of oneself in such a way as to position others in a correlative position is the main aspect of positioning of others. Tran (2008; 2011; 2016) questions if ISs should have the onus of adaptation, suggesting that a dialogical model for mutual adaptation between ISs and academics would enhance teaching and learning of ISs as they have the potential for transformative learning.

Fox (2016) conducted an in-depth, longitudinal study, over a period of ten months, with a Chinese international student during his first year at an American university. Positioning theory was used to explore the student’s strategic positioning of himself in achieving his goals. The study examined the single participant’s reflexive and interactive positions both within and outside of the classroom. Findings from the study indicated that the participant positioned himself strategically for academic and social success as he actively exercised personal agency in forming strong personal networks. Fox concluded that ISs offer a diversity of linguistic, personal and cultural resources which should be utilised by American academics to formulate optimal educational experiences for ISs.

This section has introduced and explained positioning theory and its tenet of personal agency. The review highlighted recent empirical studies which utilised positioning theory in the context of ISs, indicating that positioning is a valid means of exploring ISs’ adjustments. Increasingly, positioning theory is being used with ISs and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research. Tran’s (2007) Australian study is relevant to the current study as it provides insights into ISs’ adjustments from a nuanced perspective. It also highlights that ISs are active decision makers who position and reposition themselves or are positioned by others. The current study aims to understand adjustment influences on ISs and positioning theory provides an avenue to develop in-depth
understandings.

**Personal Agency**
The notion of personal agency, central to positioning theory, is particularly relevant to the choices individuals make in institutional discourses. Rather than viewing ISs as culturally static individuals, positioning theory suggests that ISs are agentic individuals. The theory of agency is based on social cognitive theory. Bandura (2006) expounds the view of individuals as being “contributors to their life circumstances, not just products of them” and “distinguishes three modes of agency – individual, proxy and collective” (p. 164-165). Although all three forms of agency are exercised in varying degrees during the course of daily life, of relevance to the current study is the notion of personal agency. Personal agency refers to the free-will and determination of individuals where “people bring their influence to bear on their own functioning and on environmental events” (Bandura, 2006, p. 165).

Ward (2013) refers to the conscious decision making processes of ISs where different aspects of the self are highlighted as dependent upon the context. In Ward’s (2013) view, balanced individuals often alternate between ethnic, cultural, religious or national orientations as they view the need for different types of roles or behaviours across settings. This led to the idea of blending – the process of attaining balance through the hybridisation of multiple roles, behaviours and identities as individuals consciously decide which elements of traditional and mainstream cultures to adopt (Ward, 2013). Marginson questions the notion of adjustment beliefs which aim for “cultural fit” (2014, p. 8) and argues for the ‘active agency’ of ISs. Therefore, agency, or the “sum of a person’s capacity to act on his/her own behalf” is at the crux of identity formation and is “irreducible” as it is the stimulus which allows for self-exploration, negotiation and evolution (Marginson, 2014, p. 10). Sen (2000) states that ISs should be viewed as agents and producers of their own lives, not helpless victims or dependent children. Marginson (2014) argues that the cultural fit model, described earlier, is inappropriate as it does not take into account the dynamism of identity construction and that ISs are variable, complex and changing as identities are not static (Kashima & Loh, 2006). In fact, HE is a process of “student self-formation” (Marginson, 2014, p.12) as students are engaged with a process of constantly changing themselves. In the context of ISs, student agency refers to the “quality of students’ self-reflective and intentional action and interaction with their environment” encompassing notions of agentic possibility (power) and agentic
orientation (will) (Klemenčič, 2015, p. 13). Klemenčič (2015) argues that students are agentic as they attempt to influence their educational journey, future lives and surroundings, therefore, being highly conducive to action and interaction (Klemenčič, 2015).

Tran’s (2007) study which examined the writing habits of international Vietnamese and Chinese students and academics illustrates the personal agency of students. Tran (2007, 2008, 2011, 2013) identified three types of adaptation – committed adaptation, surface adaptation and hybrid adaptation. Personal agency is apparent in these three forms of adaptation with students repositioning themselves over a period of time as they make choices on accepting, rejecting or accommodating dominant conventions, thus indicating determined and purposeful strategic adaptation. From the patterns which emerged, Tran (2008) explains surface adaptation as students having a superficial acceptance of dominant conventions to obtain membership into the academic community. Thus, they disguise their true beliefs and restrain their agency in order to comply with requirements of the new academic culture. Surface adaptation might also be apparent when students lack comfort or positivity about the writing expectations of academics. When students exercise agency and deliberately position themselves to accommodate what is required of them, they exhibit committed adaptation. In this situation, students are positive and accepting of the shifts required of them. Hybrid adaptation occurs when students perceive their first language as a resource and actively and creatively engage with their disciplinary requirements. Tran’s (2007) study clearly articulates the prevalence of personal agency in ISs and emphasises that adjustment studies have to move beyond highlighting differences and examining cultural fits to building the perception of ISs as active agents who make conscious, deliberate decisions in adjusting to a new culture.

Pollman’s belief that one’s habitus is “complex, situational and relative to the realm of individual agency” (2009, p. 583) emphasises the relevance of perceiving ISs as agentic individuals. Of relevance as well is Tran’s articulation of ISs as ‘transformative’ learners by way of explaining the changes made by ISs as they negotiate the demands of HE. Tran (2012) defines transformative learning as “a changing process in which international students construct reality through revisiting their existing assumptions and moving towards life-changing developments in their personal and professional perspectives” (2012, p. 124). ISs’ acknowledgement of existing preconceptions is an addition to ISs’ adjustment literature, which highlights the need to explore beliefs and attitudes ISs might
bring with them into the host setting.

**Identity Construction**
In recent years, the concept of identity has begun to dominate research on ISs (Doherty & Singh, 2005; Gerlach, 2015; Hellstén 2008; Hellstén & Prescott, 2004; Singh & Doherty, 2008; Tran, 2012). From a post-structuralist perspective, identity is unfixed, dynamic, fluid, and ever-changing (Norton, 1997; 2000) in contrast to structuralists’ view that identity is static and essentialised. Norton (1997) introduced the post-structuralist perspective of identity, particularly in SLA, as subjective, referring to “how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future” (Norton, 1997, p. 410). Identity construction is complex and context-dependent. Language plays an important role in identity construction as “identities are produced through participation in discourse”, where language consists of a system of beliefs, attitudes and values that exist within particular social and cultural practices” (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 11).

Some scholars refer to situated identities where different aspects of the self are dependent on the context. Individuals acknowledge the need for different types of roles and behaviours where they pick and choose which elements of mainstream and traditional cultures to adopt (Ward, 2013). This implies that ISs’ identities should be viewed as a “process of becoming” (Hall, 1996, p. 4) as these students invest in diverse cultural and linguistic competencies (Singh & Doherty, 2008). Thus, identity is neither fixed nor static but “work[s]-in progress, meshing the positions and resources on offer in dialogue with the biographical solutions of the individual” (Singh & Doherty, 2008, p. 13). Hellstén (2008) argues that ISs’ experiences in the host culture have a significant impact on their cultural perceptions of academic discourses which is instrumental in creating new student identities in the host academic community.

Koehne’s (2005) study with ISs, conducted from a post-modern, post-structuralist perspective, offers insights into discourses constructed by and about ISs and their responses as to how they are positioned. The Australian-based study across three Victorian universities collected data from semi-structured interviews with 25 ISs from China, Europe Africa and South America from undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The study concluded that the construction of ISs as a group leads to inevitable
subjectivities in relation to similarities and differences with the dominant group. The prevalence of a limiting discourse leads to closed subject positions for ISs and they are either able to resist or break free from these predetermined positions. Koehne recommends a fluid and hybrid discourse so that ISs can embrace and relate the multiplicity of their experiences as they construct a “complex, fluid, changing, reinventing self” (Koehne, 2005, p. 115). This study is significant in that it promotes the view of ISs as being limited by the prevalent discourse but also attempting to negotiate an identity within those limitations. Therefore, if the discourse is more open and hybrid, ISs could alter their discourse accordingly.

Hellstén (2008) explored the perceptions of first year ISs to obtain comprehensive representations of their experiences. The research, conducted over a 5-year period, involved hour-long semi-structured interviews with both undergraduates and postgraduates across different disciplines, focusing on experiences in the initial 6-12 months period on arrival in the host country. The interview transcripts were critically analysed through the ‘talk as interaction’ ethno-methodological framework. Similar to other IS transition studies (Doherty & Singh, 2005; Hellstén & Prescott, 2004), Hellstén (2008) concluded that ISs possess an innate capacity to adjust to new academic and sociocultural environments. However, Hellstén (2008) paid particular attention to the discursive device with which ISs manage identity development and adaptation, and argues that it is highly dependent on the transition period. Hellstén (2008) recommends the rethinking of pedagogies in HE institutions to better support and enable the development of situated identities which are constantly evolving based on contexts. However, as Hellstén and Prescott (2004) note, the process of identity construction for ISs is challenging, particularly from their position as outsiders who need to learn an entirely new academic discourse and mimic the host culture’s ways of writing, speaking, knowing, valuing and believing.

Singh and Doherty’s (2008) empirical study explored how ISs construct their identities and their negotiation of positioning in particular educational settings, as well as teachers’ discursive frames, in evaluating IS’s motives. The data consisted of 24 semi-structured interviews with groups of two to three students (total 36 students) studying on an academic preparation course at an Australian university, as well as nine academics who were teaching the ISs. The study was part of a larger study into curriculum and pedagogy for ISs. The study examined the participants’ accounts and the
construction of identity-in-the-making. Insights were provided into the different worldviews and motivations of academics and students. The authors found a distinction between the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of the academics and students in regards to “cultural exploration” (Singh & Doherty, 2008, p. 25). The academics questioned the pragmatic, extrinsic motivations of the students which they felt to be minimising their importance as educators. The academics believed the ISs were “using education as a resource for upward mobility” (Singh & Doherty, 2008, p. 25). Both academics and ISs were found to construct different identities based on their prior expectations and motivations.

Gu, Schweisfurth and Day (2010) conducted a mixed-method, two-year study on the experiences of international first-year undergraduate students and their transitions into four UK HE institutions. The study consisted of two stages. In the first stage, a questionnaire survey was distributed to all 1288 first year international students at the four UK universities, resulting in a 19% return rate (approximately 244). The second stage involved the longitudinal development of case studies of 10 ISs studying across a range of disciplines over a 15-month period. Four semi-structured interviews were conducted during the first two years of the students’ study to explore key issues which shaped their experiences. In addition, qualitative data was obtained through narrative interviews using an adapted instrument which asked students to recall high, low and turning-points during their course of study. Finally, a second survey was carried out for comparative purposes with the first survey. The study explored the transitional experiences of the participants from the perspectives of maturation and human development as well as intercultural adaptation to new academic and sociocultural environments. Similar to the previous studies cited in this section, ISs’ adaptation was found to be a complex mix of “shifting associations between language mastery, social interaction, personal development and academic outcomes” (Gu, Schweisfurth & Day, 2010, p. 20). The authors argued that the management of the complex amalgam results in intercultural adaptation and successful reconfiguration of ‘identity’. Reconfiguration of identity was necessitated as the consequence of transitional and transformational aspects of intercultural learning experiences. One of the major limitations of the study was the lack of statistical robustness due to poor questionnaire return rates. However, the study is significant in its contribution to the growing field of research in ISs which views them as active agents who have the capacity to mould their identities to different situations.
Fotovatian (2012) and Fotovatian and Miller (2013) conducted studies with international PhD students at an Australian university to explore the notion of identity construction. Findings from the study illustrate the role of personal agency in the identity construction of postgraduate ISs. The study comprised two interconnected phases. The first phase involved audio-recordings of participants’ lunchtime conversations over a period of 4 months to determine how they positioned themselves through their discourse. The researcher, who was absent during these conversations, left three general stimulus questions for discussion amongst the eight participants, who were divided into two groups of four. The second phase consisted of participants’ narratives and two focus groups. The first focus group was conducted in the early stages of the participants’ PhD journey while the second took place two years later. Participants were found to be developing an institutional identity based on transactional and transitional processes as they attempted to negotiate a “legitimate PhD identity” (Fotovatian, 2012, p. 585). However, participants were limited in their development by labels such as ‘international student’ which carried loaded negative connotations. Such labelling discourse made it challenging for participants as they attempted to construct a legitimate identity. Similar to Koehne’s (2005), Doherty and Singh’s (2005) and Singh and Doherty’s (2008) studies, Fotovatian’s (2012) study highlights the limiting aspect of discourse associated with ISs in the Australian academic community. A rethinking of ISs as individuals with personal agency and capable of self-formation (Marginson, 2014) and a recognition of the heterogeneity of ISs is necessitated.

Spindler and Spindler’s (1992) theory of the self which identifies three main ‘selves’ (the enduring self, the situated self and the endangered self) provides insights into the adjustment process. The enduring self is deeply rooted in sociocultural practices which are the norm in the home country. The situated self develops during the process of adjustment to a new academic and sociocultural environment. The endangered self develops when the situated self is subject to unfamiliar demands over prolonged periods of time, which endangers the enduring self. However, the endangered self can be repaired through cultural therapy which is a process that involves conscious learning of ways to make situational adaptations, to verbalise the dual nature of the self in cross-cultural situations, and make efforts to engage the situated self to act in culturally appropriate ways. Through this consciousness-raising process, individuals develop instrumental competence and self-efficacy which facilitates academic adjustments.
Although this framework has mainly been used in studies on linguistic minorities in the world, it provides an alternative approach to understanding ISs’ adjustments.

**Summary**
This section reviewed the role of positioning theory and personal agency in IS identity construction. These concepts were developed as views of ISs evolved from cultural difference and dissonance to perceiving them as active agentic individuals who construct their identity based on context. However, ISs are limited by predominantly negative, loaded discourse as well as their own preconceptions. While this review has explained each of the three key concepts separately, in any post-structuralist study positioning is interconnected with personal agency and identity construction. Thus, ISs are both positioned by discourse in the host environment, and position themselves in response as they are actively engaged through a strong sense of personal agency to construct identities appropriate to the academic and sociocultural setting of the host environment.

**Biggs 3P Model of Student Learning**
The 3P model, initially devised by Biggs (1987; 1990a) and later revised (Biggs, Kember & Leung, 2001) is of relevance to the current study. The model, used extensively in educational research, explains the interactions between lecturers and students derived from students’ perceptions of the teaching and learning environment, learning strategies and learning outcomes. The initial 3P model was developed by Biggs (1987) based on a questionnaire study with 420 Canadian university freshmen enrolled in English and Chemistry classes, 15 Australian university Diploma in Education students and 148 Asian Diploma in Education students. The model provides a cross-cultural framework that examines motivations as well as learning behaviours which impinge on students’ academic achievement.

The 3P model, a key framework in Student Learning Theory, is an integrated system consisting of three main phases in student learning: presage, process and product (Biggs, 1987, 1990a). The first phase, presage, indicates factors which exist prior to learning and include a number of personal and situational factors. Personal factors include student characteristics such as prior knowledge, Intelligence Quotient, home background, values, personality, and language proficiency in the local medium of instruction. Situational factors include course structure, curriculum content, methods of
teaching and assessment, and rules and regulations pertaining to institutional and classroom situations (Ramburuth & McCormick, 2001).

The second phase of the 3P model, process, focusses on how a student engages in learning, including the motives for learning. This stage of the model includes strategies for engaging in the learning so as to produce the desired outcome. These strategies and motives combine to form three key approaches to learning: the ‘deep approach’, ‘surface approach’ and ‘achieving approach’ (Biggs, 1990a). Students adopting the deep approach attempt to understand underlying meanings in texts, while those adopting a surface approach only read at the sentence level, focussing on memorisation of facts and reproduction of information. The findings of the original study were supported by subsequent quantitative factor analytical studies (Biggs, 1988; Ramsden, 1992) which investigated students’ perceptions of assessment, teaching and courses and how these influenced their attitudes and approaches to studying (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983). As assessment was found to be an important component, a third category was added to the deep/surface approach to learning. This was called ‘strategic or achieving’ which highlighted students who were motivated to achieve academic success. The third category offers an insight into learners often governed by the need to perform well on assessments, such as ISs. Different students have different purposes for learning. While some are motivated by the need to gain information in order to replicate it for assessment purposes, others view learning as a transformational process and knowledge as a means towards gaining personal understanding (Tran, 2012).

The final phase of the 3P model, product or outcome, refers to the learning outcomes achieved with the “nature and structure of the knowledge constructed by the learner differ[ing] according to the approach adopted” (Biggs 1995, p. 4). The dynamic, interactive learning system provided in the Biggs (1990) model through the two-way interactions between presage, process and product is relevant to this study. The model provides insights into the different roles of teachers and students and the expectations each would have of the learning process. It can also be applied to both the APC and CHC IS context.

**Role of EL Proficiency in ISs’ Adjustments**

EL proficiency issues present significant challenges for ISs in adjusting to the host academic and sociocultural environment. The term EL proficiency has dual meanings. It
can refer to the minimum requirement for entry into an Australian university for tertiary study. However, it also has a general meaning as provided in the AUQA report which defines EL proficiency as “the ability of students to use the English language to make and communicate meaning in spoken and written contexts while completing their university studies” (2009, p. 1). While the former meaning is used in reference to specific entry scores, the latter definition is used to inform discussions on EL in the current study.

For ISs, the issue of having to adjust to a different host culture is compounded by a perceived or real lack of EL proficiency which emphasises the complexity of their learning needs. This complexity arises from having to adapt to a new culture in addition to facing the challenges of a new academic environment and new academic and sociocultural discourses. The consequences of inadequate EL proficiency on the performance of ISs have been well documented with strong proficiency a precursor to academic success (Birrell, 2006; Bradley 2008; Gunawardena & Wilson, 2012; Park & Son, 2011; Robertson, Line, Jones & Thomas, 2000; Sawir, 2005; Volet, 1999; Volet & Ang, 2012; Wu, Garza & Guzman, 2015).

ISs choosing to study in Australia have to demonstrate that they meet prerequisite English requirements. Despite meeting this requirement, many ISs lack sufficient EL proficiency mainly because a gap exists between test results and the students’ competence to cope with the university environment. Meeting EL entry requirements does not “guarantee that they have native-like fluency or writing skills in English”, as the problems ISs face may be due to lack of “understanding and use of academic-level English” (Gunawardena & Wilson, 2012, p. 28). Volet and Ang (2012) argue that while EL proficiency tests such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) are reasonably good tests of reading and writing skills, it may not be an accurate measure of ISs’ aural comprehension skills or their ability to express their ideas in a classroom setting. Foster argues that “English fluency is a clear academic skill” and ISs are disadvantaged due to differences in academic and social cultures (2012, p. 587). The duality of the EL proficiency issue is apparent as ISs, particularly from Asia, have only been exposed to English as a second language which was taught as standard English with formal grammar.
Studies conducted with a number of Australian universities in the 1980s and 1990s (Ballard & Clanchy 1991; 1997; Burke, 1986; Burns, 1991; Samuelowicz 1987) concluded that while many academic support and teaching staff are empathetic towards the challenges and needs of ISs, “students and staff often attribute the difficulties largely to an insufficient proficiency in English” (Ballard, 1987 p. 116). These perceptions are not confined to the teaching and academic support staff, but also reflected in the views of ISs who perceive their own lack of academic progress to be the consequence of lack of EL proficiency (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Burns, 1991).

EL proficiency issues are correlated to academic and sociocultural adjustments (Robertson et al., 2000). In the academic context, lack of confidence in speaking situations negatively affects academic adjustments. Lewthwaite (1996) states that many ISs experience frustration as they lack the confidence to make verbal contributions in lectures and tutorials. The issues identified in Lewthwaite’s (1996) study include difficulty in understanding lectures, taking notes, reading academic literature and difficulty in understanding the informal varieties of English (Lewthwaite, 1996). Sawir (2005) supported these findings in her study with ISs which found that difficulties with English was the main problem they faced amongst all the social and academic issues identified, including differences in learning styles and homesickness. The study, part of a larger study about learner beliefs in English as a Foreign Language, involved interviews with 12 ISs at an Australian university who were undertaking an academic preparatory program prior to their undergraduate studies. Findings from the study found that lack of confidence in speaking in the second language (L2) was one of the more serious difficulties facing ISs.

Similarly, other studies stated L2-related factors affect academic adjustment (Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Holmes, 2000). Andrade’s (2006) review of studies on challenges faced by ISs identified difficulties with EL and culture as significant hindrances. The author argued that ISs are faced with the twin challenge of “lack of language proficiency and cultural knowledge” which underlies most of their issues as language issues themselves “may be culturally based ways of seeing the world” (2006, p. 143). Thus, Andrade’s (2006) review highlights the interconnections between language and culture.
Studies have shown ISs have difficulty expressing themselves clearly and fluently (Hellstén 2002; Hellstén & Prescott, 2004; Liu & Jackson, 2008; Mulligan & Kirkpatrick, 2000; Sawir, 2005) which may help to explain their silence in the classroom setting (Liu & Jackson, 2008; Volet & Kee, 1993). ISs’ classroom silence highlights the communicative aspect of EL proficiency, which is much more than a formal language system of grammatical and sentence structure accuracy. Prescott and Hellstén (2005) explain that ISs, particularly from “so-called Asian backgrounds” require explicit training in ‘Western’ style academic writing or unintentional transfers of previously learned cultural practices onto their Australian writing assignments may occur (2005, p. 78). Similarly, a US based phenomenological study with 12 female Omani nursing ISs concluded that the participants’ experiences were transformational as they adjusted from experiencing adaptation challenges to becoming self-reliant and eventually adjusted to the demands of the host culture (Mc-Dermott Levy, 2011). The study also found that the participants’ experienced issues with EL in grammar, writing and contributing to classroom discussions. Participants explained their reticence to participate in classroom discussions as they felt their English was not good enough and feared being misunderstood. Although their English was at an appropriate level (they had met IELTS entry), they were conscious of their English ability and explained speaking to native speakers was particularly challenging, as it required different levels of understanding and comprehension. American accents were also found to pose difficulty for the participants.

An Australian study with 22 ISs (seven men and 15 women) who participated in focus group interviews reported EL proficiency as a significant challenge (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011). Issues identified by the ISs included difficulty in understanding Australian accents and concerns with being intelligible to others due to accents. The authors concluded that ISs lacked confidence which slowed down their speech and comprehension of subject matter in the classroom. Academic reading and writing were also hindered by lack of EL proficiency or, as the authors termed it, “EL deficits” (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011, p. 218). Participants in the study reported complications in group work due to EL issues as well as difficulties in interacting with tutors and lecturers. The perception of limited EL skills was also identified as a major obstacle in developing social links (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011). One of the strategies identified by participants was to obtain help from senior students, mostly other ISs. The study provides a comprehensive overview of the different contexts which were challenging
for ISs due to lack of EL proficiency. The study also highlights some of the strategies developed by ISs to overcome these challenges, indicating the active agency of ISs.

A recent Australian study across three universities aimed to understand the initial challenges faced by ISs from the students’ perspective (Ashton-Hay, Wignell & Evans, 2016). The mixed-method study, involving 140 students, focussed on EL proficiency issues and provided a current snapshot of ISs’ experiences and perceptions. Qualitative data were obtained from open-ended survey questions and three focus group interviews while quantitative data was gathered from enrolment information, grade results and self-reports on EL proficiency scores. Participants in the study included undergraduates, coursework postgraduates and students from offshore campuses. Similar findings were found across the three universities: the key issues facing ISs related to writing, speaking and listening which they perceived would improve if more opportunities to interact in EL were provided. In addition, the findings also highlighted the challenges ISs face in cultural competence, rapid pace and accent of Australian speech, as well as a lack of academic literacy.

Various authors have noted the importance of EL in ISs’ academic adjustment. Novera (2004) conducted an adjustment study with 25 (8 female, 17 male) international Indonesian post-graduate students at an Australian university. The open-ended questionnaire method used in the study confirmed findings of other studies which found cultural issues to be significant in the adjustment process. Specifically, the study highlighted the use of academic English as a significant problem. Robertson et al. (2000) examined both staff and student perceptions relative to each other. The study used the Delphi technique, utilising open-ended questionnaires, to obtain feedback on ISs’ experiences. The Delphi technique makes use of iterative feedback to obtain consensus and statistical summaries. The study initially involved 408 students and 121 academic staff teaching them, which reduced to 20 students and 26 staff by the final round. The researchers found that ISs were frustrated by academic staff use of idiomatic language which aggravated their poor English competence. Academic staff were found to be critical of ISs’ reluctance to participate in classroom discussions. The authors concluded that the cause of poor IS participation could be attributed to poor language competence rather than cultural reticence (Robertson et al., 2000). The studies cited emphasise the importance of EL in ISs’ academic adjustment. Lack of EL proficiency has severe repercussions on ISs’ ability to effectively function in the host academic
Lack of confidence in verbal interactions is closely linked to communicative competence, particularly in relation to sociocultural adaptation. Masgoret and Ward (2006) developed an interactive model on the relationships between proficiency in the target language, communication competence, effective intercultural interaction and sociocultural adaptation. The study concluded that language competence and communication competence were key components of ISs’ sociocultural adaptation, supplemented by effective intercultural interaction. Other studies have also concluded that strong proficiency in the target language was the basis of successful communication among members of different ethnolinguistic communities (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2005). A UK study (Gu, Schweisfurth & Day, 2010) highlighted the importance of EL in social contexts. The authors expound the view that ISs not only need to master EL but must also have an “understanding of the ‘hidden’ societal and cultural values and norms attached to the language” (2010, p.16). Better fluency leads to more interactions with members of the host culture, leading to fewer sociocultural adjustment problems (Ward & Kennedy, 1993).

The significance of EL proficiency in academic and sociocultural settings was highlighted in prior studies. Robertson et al. (2000), highlighted earlier, also found that participants in their study had considerable difficulty understanding colloquial language which led to feelings of isolation. A US study, using a qualitative case-study approach with 10 ISs, found ISs experience academic challenges, social isolation and cultural adjustment (Wu, Garza & Guzman, 2015). The irony highlighted in these studies is that better sociocultural adaptation would be promoted by more interactions with host nationals, but as ISs lack confidence they have limited opportunities for social interactions (Clément, Noels, & Deneault, 2001; Ward, 2004). Therefore, EL issues play a significant role in academic and sociocultural adaptation (Yu & Shen, 2012).

The need for universities to provide assistance to students whose literary practices are different to those practiced in Australia has been put forward by scholars. They argue that comprehensive, cross-cultural research in English communication within the university setting is inadequate (Foster, 2012; Gunawardena & Wilson, 2012; Sawir, 2005). The fact that the issue of EL proficiency at tertiary institutions is a matter of concern is apparent from the AUQA (2009) project which aimed to develop a set of
good practice principles for EL proficiency in academic studies, as explained in Chapter Two.

The AUQA (2009) project and the adoption of the ELSHE (highlighted in Chapter Two), while commendable, must take into consideration the views of scholars who question the validity of the perception that academic problems can be attributed to just a lack of EL proficiency (Foster 2012; Gunawardena & Wilson, 2012; Ramburuth & McCormick, 2001; Sawir, 2005). Foster (2012) argues that a remedial approach to students’ language and learning problems is inappropriate in a situation where all students need to acquire the basic skills for critical thinking and academic writing.

**Summary**

This section has explained EL issues as a concern which affects ISs’ academic and sociocultural adjustment. While ISs have to meet minimum IELTS entry to prove English competence prior to engaging in tertiary studies in Australia, the interconnections between language and culture limit ISs’ participation both in classroom and social settings. Lack of confidence in EL abilities limited ISs’ classroom participation as they had difficulty understanding Australian accents and feared being misunderstood. EL issues also affected ISs’ academic skills in reading, writing and listening. Socioculturally, ISs were limited from widening their social participation in EL social circles as they lacked knowledge on the nuances of sociocultural English. In particular, ISs found colloquial language difficult to comprehend. Thus, it is important to understand the role of EL in ISs’ adjustments.

**Postgraduate Students – Experiences, Expectations and Issues**

The current study examined issues of both international undergraduate and postgraduate students. However, literature on ISs’ adjustment issues highlight postgraduates, particularly PhD ISs, encounter specific challenges which are different to undergraduate students. Studies relevant to international postgraduate students’ experiences, expectations and issues are described in this section.

A range of studies have investigated the academic staff/IS relationship in the postgraduate context (Aspland & O’Donoghue, 1994; Channel, 1990; Elsey, 1990; Cho, Roberts & Roberts, 2008; Golde & Dore, 2001; Goode, 2007; Son & Park, 2014; Wisker 2005; Zuber-Skerritt & Ryan, 1994). Findings indicate that postgraduate students’ success is highly dependent on developing positive supervisory relationships.
The quality of the supervisor/supervisee relationship and communication is significantly influenced by the roles adopted by both parties in practice (Wilkinson, 2005). The divergence between academic staff expectations and the reality of the skills level of ISs can cloud supervisory relationships from the outset due to a lack of understanding and poor communication between both the students and their supervisors (Aspland & O’Donoghue, 1994; Zuber-Skerritt, & Ryan, 1994; Zuber-Skerrit & Roche, 2004).

The experiences of international Masters by Research students in Education at an Australian university were studied by Apsland and O’Donoghue (1994). Their findings included the identification of four categories of supervisory relationships: alienation from the university, the human qualities of the supervisor, the teaching strategies of the supervisor, and the supervisor’s cultural understandings. Students were unhappy with the degree of self-managed research they were expected to undertake as they expected their supervisors to focus their reading from an early stage “and structure their reading towards identifying a problem area within narrow parameters” (Aspland & O’Donoghue, 1994, p. 69). This Australian study provides explanations on potential sources of misunderstandings between students and supervisors.

Despite these limitations, international postgraduate students are both adaptable and able to engage with transformative learning, a process where learners are transformed through reflection, rational discourse and emancipatory action (Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2014; Tran, 2012). An American study examining the learning experiences of 198 Asian international postgraduate students from the Colleges of Arts and Sciences and Engineering found that 82.3% of the participants experienced transformative learning. While initially experiencing cultural difficulties, the participants were eventually able to participate effectively in classroom discussions and think critically (Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2014).

The importance of the supervisory relationship is intensified for international postgraduate research students, as the relationship with their supervisor is the most significant factor in their learning experiences. However, students are not always well-prepared, especially for the private communication process (Golde & Dore, 2001; Wisker, 2005). The 112 postgraduates in Elsey’s UK (1990) study had an image of an “ideal supervisor” who would provide “guidance at the initial stages of a research project, not only specifically related to the academic task but in gaining access to
learning facilities such as computers, libraries, laboratories, and, above all, resource staff” (Elsey, 1990, p. 55). A comparative study on the perceptions of postgraduates on their supervision provides insight into the expectations and roles of supervisors (Sidhu, Kaur, Fook & Yunus, 2014). The study made use of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with 66 postgraduate students from Malaysia and 33 from the UK. The findings showed significant differences in the perceptions of the two cohorts. While the Malaysian postgraduates’ perceptions focused on the social affective domain, the UK postgraduates stressed the cognitive domain. The Malaysian postgraduates had higher and greater demands of their supervisors who they felt should be people oriented, encouraging and boost their confidence. In contrast, the UK postgraduates in the study were less demanding of their supervisors but expected them to be experts in specific fields of study. The findings of the study are reflective of earlier studies which indicate that ISs from Asian/NESB tend to have very different interpretations of the supervisory relationship to those from Western backgrounds (Ballard & Clanchy, 1997; Biggs, 2003; Elsey, 1990).

Channel’s (1990) quantitative UK study with 158 students reports that international postgraduate students and supervisors perceive their relationship to be lacking in understanding. Academic staff expected ISs to have the same level of understanding and awareness of research skills as their local students. ISs held their supervisors in reverence and thought of them as the ultimate possessors of knowledge. Students expected their supervisors to give them close guidance and were lost on being told to do their own reading and research. Students were told to approach their tutors/supervisors without hesitation, but their inability to do so provides an insight into their cultural framework. Being from largely hierarchical structures where ‘face’ is important, the students were unable to comfortably approach their tutors. Channel (1990) argues that many of the students’ experiences may have been due to cultural miscommunication and communication breakdowns in the student/supervisor relationship.

Channel’s (1990) findings are corroborated by Leong’s (2010) study which examined 36 Chinese postgraduate music education students’ perceptions of the supervisee/supervisor relationship. The participants were from three different Chinese HE institutions. Based on the results of a survey, the author concluded that Chinese students would like their supervisors to play the role of mentor, counsellor, advisor and be their “friend” and “supporter” (Leong, 2010, p. 151). In line with other research,
students still wanted close guidance from their supervisors on whom they were dependent. However, the finding that students expect their supervisor to be a “friend” is contrary to the traditional expectations of authority relationships in high power distance cultures like China. The author believes this is an indication that while “mainstream Chinese culture remains Confucian in spirit” (Qi, cited in Leong, 2010, p. 152), 21st century China is changing and may not be as fundamentally Confucian as believed. Thus, ISs’ needs and desires are changing and the dynamism of education must develop accordingly to match changing expectations.

Other studies have explored issues specifically from the perspective of PhD ISs. Goode’s (2007) UK based study adopted a qualitative interview approach with 20 ISs from a range of countries and disciplines and eight academic staff at one university. The author argued that academic staff need to avoid stereotyping groups of students as being more ‘dependent’ than others and problematising their own supervisory practices. The author contends that as international doctoral students have negotiated various transitions prior to doctoral studies, they have the capacity to adjust to a new environment as long as they understand the “rules of the game” (Goode, 2007, p. 597). The study provides insights into difficulties faced by both ISs and supervisors; recommends the elimination of a deficit model; and suggests that supervisors develop an empathetic, forthcoming attitude with their students so that ISs’ expectations are managed from the outset.

Son and Park’s (2014) Australian study explored the experiences of seven international PhD students on an academic preparatory program or English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program. The study used background information questionnaires, group discussions and semi-structured in-depth individual interviews. The findings of the study explained students’ satisfaction with the EAP which they felt provided them with good preparation for the academic reading and writing skills necessary for PhD studies. The authors concluded that EAP programs need to develop ISs’ writing abilities and that students were mostly concerned about their EL proficiency issues and relationships with their supervisors.

The studies cited in this section highlight issues in international postgraduate student-supervisory relationships. The quality of the relationship is instrumental for international postgraduate student success. However, the relationship is significantly
impeded by differing supervisee/supervisor expectations, aggravated in the context of ISs who have to contend with a different set of academic and social expectations. The studies indicate that while ISs are capable of adapting, they require the appropriate tools and need to be guided accordingly.

**Role of Motivations in ISs’ Adjustments**

This section provides a review of studies which explain the cognitive behaviours of ISs in relation to motivation and learning goals. Such behaviours allow for adjustments to occur, although the degree of successful adjustment will necessarily vary among different individuals and cultures. The section begins by providing a definition of cognition and self-regulated learning (SRL), explains Self-Determination Theory (SDT), and concludes with the setting of learning goals amongst ISs. Studies conducted in the 1990s on ISs’ learning behaviours, which examined the role of SRL/SDT and the setting of learning goals, are reviewed. The final part of this section reviews recent studies to indicate the resurgence in interest in SRL strategies in the context of ISs’ adjustments.

**Definition of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL)**

In conducting a study on the adaptation and adjustment issues facing ISs, it is necessary to understand the dynamic cognitions involved in the process of adjustments which inevitably impacts on achievement. Cognition, as a concept, is very complex. Generally defined, cognition refers to a “set of skills of specific type of content which is typically of the physical world (as opposed to the social, emotional or linguistic worlds) or knowledge as measured by standard Piagetian tasks” (Fischer, 1980, p. 481). The study examines cognition in the context of skill theory and motivations where the individual exercises control (Catania, 1978; Skinner, 1938; 1969). In this context, the person can control sources of variation in what they think and do, thus regulating their behavior.

SRL is a meta-construct referring to the moderation of affective, cognitive, and behavioral processes throughout a learning experience to reach a desired level of achievement (Boekarts, Maes & Karoly, 2005; Pintrich, 2000; Zimmermann, 1989). Pintrich defines SRL as “an active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning, and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation and behavior, guided and constrained by their goals and contextual features in the environment” (2005, p. 453). Pintrich’s (2005) definition reflects the goal-
oriented behavior of students and highlights the working together of multiple processes in achieving set goals, particularly within a learning context. This definition is used in the current study as research has shown that ISs eventually become active participants of their learning in the new academic/cultural environment and regulate their behaviours and adjust to meet their learning goals.

Although different models of self-regulation exist, the basic assumptions about learning and regulation are common to all the models. Pintrich (2005, p. 452-453) identifies four common assumptions in these models. First, the learner is viewed as an active, constructive participant in the learning process. Learners are not just passive recipients; they actively construct meanings from both the internal (their own minds) and the external environment (such as teachers and parents). The second assumption relates to the potential for control. Learners have the potential to regulate aspects of their own cognition, motivation and behaviours. The third assumption, goal criterion or standard assumption, refers to the learning goals set by individuals. Pintrich explains that this assumption refers to individuals who set their own “standards or goals to strive for in their learning, monitor their progress towards these goals, and then adapt and regulate their cognition, behaviours and motivation to reach their goals” (2005, p. 453). In the final assumption, learners are viewed as independent, unique individuals who adopt self-regulatory activities which act as mediators between personal and contextual characteristics and actual achievement or performance. Thus, it is not only culture, personality or the classroom culture which determines learning achievement. It is the individuals’ self-regulation of cognition, behaviour and motivation that “mediates the relationship between the person, context and eventual achievement” (Pintrich, 2005, p. 453).

Goal setting triggers self-regulation (Sitzmann & Ely, 2011) as goals operate by directing attention to goal-related activity leading to increase in effort and persistence. Such behaviours stimulate discovery and use of task-relevant knowledge and strategies (Locke & Latham, 2002). This highlights the specific goals to which individuals are committed. Thus, SRL is a self-directed process through which learners transform mental abilities into task-related academic skills as they control their thoughts, feelings and action to achieve academically (Zimmermann, 2001; Zimmermann & Schunk, 2003). In analysing academic achievement, student perceptions of themselves as learners and their use of various processes must be investigated as this highlights how
individuals develop particular methods of learning to improve themselves and adapt to changing contexts (Cassidy, 2011; Zimmermann, 2001). This refers to intrinsic motivation as learning is self-determined and not controlled or dependent on other factors and volition or will power. The constructs underlying SRL are learning styles, academic control beliefs and student self-evaluation (Cassidy, 2011, p. 990).

From the social-cognitive perspective (Bandura, 1986), SRL is a reciprocal causation of three influence processes: personal processes such as perceptions of ability (e.g. academic self-efficacy) and self-motivation (goals), the learning environment, and individual behaviours (Singer & Bashir, 1999; Zimmermann, 1989). SRL refers to a way of behaving which is used flexibly and “guides, monitors and directs the success of one’s performance” as well as allowing individuals “to manage and direct interactions within the learning environment in order to ensure success” (Singer & Bashir, 1999, p. 205). SRL is relevant to the current study in explaining the thoughts and emotions which govern human behaviour (Leventhal, Nerenz & Steele, 1984), in this instance ISs, as it indicates that individuals consciously attempt to control behaviour in order to mediate outcomes (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). In the context of ISs who engage in behaviour modification to adapt to the demands of a changed academic and sociocultural environment, the theory can explain their motivations as SRL has direct linkages to motivation which is a primary determinant of self-regulated outcomes (Bandura, 1994; Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). SRL can potentially facilitate aspects of behaviour-change process as it can promote well-being, adaptation and survival (Garrin, 2014).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)
In addition to insights gained from SRL in understanding ISs’ behaviour, SDT provides further explanations on different motivational levels to explain behavioural changes. SDT is an influential, complex meta-theory of educational and positive psychology. The theory provides illumination on the different contexts in which an individual’s behaviour is self-motivated and self-determined (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2008). Ryan and Deci (2000) distinguish between ‘intrinsic’ and ‘extrinsic’ motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfaction rather than for some external consequence, while extrinsic motivation refers to “doing something because it leads to a separable outcome” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 55). Intrinsic motivation is an important phenomenon for educators and can result in high-quality
learning and creativity. Of particular significance is Ryan and Deci’s (2000) explication of the different types of extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation can represent “impoverished forms” of motivation, but also identifies those which represent “active, agentic states” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 55). The authors explain that students can perform extrinsically motivated actions either with resentment/disinterest or with an attitude of willingness showing impoverished motivation. On the other hand, when extrinsic motivation propels a student into action and the extrinsic goal is “self-endorsed” with a “sense of volition”, active/agentic extrinsic motivation is apparent (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 55). Understanding the different aspects of motivation is important as these exist along a continuum and influence students in different ways.

Within SDT, there are six sub-theories; the most relevant to this study is the second sub-theory, Organismic Integration Theory (OIT). This theory was developed to explain the different forms of extrinsic motivation as well as the contexts which encourage or impede internalisation and regulation of these behaviours (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Figure 3.2 illustrates the OIT taxonomy of motivation types. These are arranged from left to right to indicate the extent to which motivation for an individual’s behaviour originates from the self.

![Figure 3.2: A Taxonomy of Human Motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 61)](image)

Amotivation, on the far left of Figure 3.2, indicates a lack of intention to act. To the right of this, various types of motivation have been organised to reflect degrees of self-determination. External regulation indicates the least autonomous form of extrinsic motivation while introjected regulation describes a type of internal regulation.
Introjection is still not completely autonomous, as it is a consequence of feelings of pressure to avoid guilt or anxiety or to attain pride. The third type of extrinsic motivation, identification, represents a more autonomous or self-determined behaviour. In this context, the individual identifies personal importance to a behaviour and accepts the regulation as their own. The most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation is integrated motivation which explains behaviours that are assimilated and internalised to the self. Integration occurs through “self-examination and bring[s] new regulations into congruence with one’s other values and needs” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 62). Another way of expressing this type of motivation is to refer to it as internalisation of extrinsic motivation, defined “as an active and natural process in which individuals transform (or not) socially sanctioned mores or requests into personally endorsed values and self-regulation” (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 235). Intrinsic motivation has been placed at the far right of Figure 3.2 which emphasises the self-determined nature of this type of motivation.

SDT and SRL are broad motivation theories which have been applied in a range of contexts such as studies on motivations of primary school students (Fried & Konza, 2013), work motivations (Gagne & Deci, 2005), fitness professionals (Garrin, 2014), organisational behaviour (Deci & Ryan, 2014) and teaching behaviours (Perlman, 2013). The current study uses SRL and SDT, particularly the concept of internalised extrinsic motivation, to explain the behaviour modifications ISs, as agentic individuals, make when studying at an Australian institution.

**ISs and Learning Goals**

SRL and SDT can be seen in the setting of learning goals and the importance of the cognitive and affective dimensions of learning (Boekarts, 1992; 1997; Volet & Chalmers, 1992). Learning goals are an effective predictor of academic performance (Volet & Renshaw, 1995). As goals are related to study strategies and performance, motivation is investigated from this perspective as goals are indicative of the students’ subjective perceptions of the learning situation (Boekarts & Niemivirta, 2000; Boekarts, Maes & Karoly 2005). Thus, the study of this dimension of motivation is not only justified, but a necessary aspect of examining ISs’ adjustment issues.

Volet and Renshaw (1995) conducted a comparative study between two matched groups (63 local and 63 international students) learning goals and their perceptions of study
settings in realizing those goals. The researchers investigated participant perceptions of the usefulness of five learning settings (Tutorials, Study Alone, Lectures, Consult and Study with Others) for the achievement of high and low level goals. The study made use of an adapted questionnaire based on Boekarts (1997) research which was given to participants in Week 1 and the last week of a 13-week semester. Data indicated that both cohorts of participants had similar perceptions both in Weeks 1 and at the end of the semester, although the hierarchy of the learning settings changed somewhat. Participant perceptions indicated that specific characteristics of study environments have a strong impact on students’ learning and achievement of learning goals were different between the two cohorts. The authors concluded that the similar patterns of change in the perceptions of the usefulness of study settings for both groups agreed with the data on students’ learning goals.

In recent times, there has been a resurgence of interest in self-regulation as a strategy of adaptation for ISs. Zhou’s (2015) American study with 19 doctoral students from developing countries in Asia and Africa examined motivation of these students to persist with their PhDs. Findings from the study found that motivation, an aspect of self-regulated behaviour, explained doctoral students’ persistence in continuing with their doctoral studies despite unsatisfying socialisation experiences. Students were motivated by their intrinsic desires and external pressures. Pintrich’s (2003) explanation of the SRL models identifies that learners control their behaviours, motivation and cognition based on both internal and external factors, which is borne out in Zhou’s (2015) study.

A similar finding was provided in Wang’s (2012) longitudinal comparative study in the UK and China. The study was based on students from mainland China who transferred to the UK for their final year of a Bachelor’s degree in Business. Eight students each from the UK and China were interviewed. The study examined ISs’ cultural inhibitions and adaptability to a group work environment in the UK university. Similar to Zhou’s (2014) findings, Wang concluded that students eventually learn to adapt to the new environment and become autonomous learners as they take responsibility for self-motivation.

Volet’s (2001) multi-dimensional framework integrates self and context into a single framework. The framework consists of a range of (meta) cognitions, expectations,
motivations and emotions that make up a students’ learning experience. Volet and Mansfield’s (2006) study on self-regulation in cooperative and collaborative learning involved 18 third year Business students majoring in Management at an Australian university. The study cohort consisted of 11 local and 7 international students (3 from Middle 3 from Middle-Northern European and 4 from South-East Asian countries) and utilised semi-structured in-depth interviews. The authors studied the mediating role of student’s personal goals and perceptions of contexts in appraisals of group work and the use of regulation strategies to achieve these goals. Two forms of self-regulation – regulation of others for self-returns and regulation of others for personal benefits emerged from the social learning environment. The authors concluded that understanding student adaptability and meta-cognitions requires a multi-level approach in which both micro and macro-level influences are significant.

Goal setting, particularly achievement goal theory, is relevant in the context of learning goals. King, Mclnerney and Watkins (2013) conducted a study with 87 Filipino and 158 Chinese students in local secondary schools. The study aimed to examine the main goals that students bring into the classroom – performance and mastery. Findings from the study indicate that mastery goals were positive predictors of learning outcomes. Although the study was conducted with secondary school students, the finding of goal-setting behaviours are relevant in the current study.

The studies cited in this section highlight an increasingly growing interest in the importance of students’ learning goals in recent research on management of academic study. Learning goals have found to be significantly related to study strategies and performance (Volet, 2001; Volet & Mansfield, 2006). In the context of ISs who tend to be achievement oriented, learning goals are relevant in providing a holistic insight into how and why ISs make adjustments to the new academic environment, justifying the need for the influence of learning goals to be studied. In attempting to isolate some of the influences associated with ISs’ adjustment, it is vital that students’ motivations and behaviours are studied in interaction with the context in which they are embedded.

**Summary**
This section has described theories relating to motivation and goal setting which are instrumental in understanding ISs’ behaviours. ISs can be seen as agentic individuals who are actively reconstructing their identities and developing strategies to adjust to a new academic and sociocultural environment. From the literature reviewed, it is
possible that ISs develop adjustment strategies due to the hybridisation of multiple roles, behaviours and identities. ISs can pick and choose elements they choose to develop (Ward, 2013). It is theorized that the reconstruction of the self occurs as identity is dynamic and changeable and related to the notion of personal agency, evident through SRL and SDT. As highlighted earlier, ISs perform well academically despite experiencing differences in academic cultures. This is primarily due to the internalised extrinsic motivation of ISs and their development of self-regulated and self-determined learning strategies as they position themselves strategically to adjust to the demands of the host culture.

**Role of Gender in ISs’ Adjustments**

At the time of this review, few studies on the influence of gender in the adjustments of ISs at tertiary level have been reported. Gender differences in academic achievement can be linked to the type of subjects studied and/or individual-specific attributes such as marital status, age and family background (Hoskins, Newstead & Dennis, 1997; McNabb, Pal & Stone, 2002; Rudd, 1984) and biological (sex) differences (Mellanby, Maxtin & O’Doherty, 2000). This section provides a brief overview of the influence of gender in the adjustment of ISs at the tertiary level with an emphasis on students from APCs and CHCs.

Gender segregation is an important aspect of APCs. In these cultures, men and women do not intermingle, especially in conservatively strict and patriarchal societies such as KSA, Iraq and Iran (Maher, Aldhafri, Al-Bahrani & Kamali, 2016). In addition to encountering similar challenges to other ISs in cross-cultural contexts, students from APCs have to address the challenge of negotiating within a mixed-gender environment (Maher, et al., 2016). Alhazmi and Nyland (2013) conducted an Australian phenomenological study with five KSA postgraduate participants (3 males, 2 females). The study focused on examining transition from a gender-segregated to a mixed-gender environment and the potential impact of being in a mixed-gender environment on the cultural identity of Saudi ISs. Findings from the study identified six themes as stated through participants’ perspectives and relating to their experiences in transitioning from gender-segregation to mixed-gender environments: difficult in the beginning, mixing gender is the best, adjustment, social network and engagement, cultural identity, and pre-departure course. These six themes have been listed here as stated in the study. However, cultural identity emerged as playing a major role in the transitioning
experience of both the male and female KSA participants. All five participants in the study experienced conflict. These conflicts involved participants’ perceptions of themselves as Saudi citizens and as experienced members of Saudi culture. The struggles faced by the KSA participants were due to cultural issues and perceptions, challenges of being without male protection, and strong identification with Saudi culture which is highly gender-segregated. Complexities associated with the cultural identity construct were also identified as the participants attempted to negotiate the new demands of working in mixed-gender environments, which they were initially reticent about but managed to address in differing degrees. The findings also indicated the dynamism of identity construction as the participants transitioned to the Australian mixed-gender environment despite initial difficulties.

Volet and Renshaw (1995) included gender as a variable in their study of the adjustments of first year Economics international tertiary students at a large Western Australian university. The study, which examined the influence of study settings on student goals and perceptions, involved two groups of participants (63 local and 63 international South-east Asian students) matched by age, gender and background knowledge in economics. Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire in the first and last weeks of a 13-week semester. The questionnaire was adapted from a previous study (Volet & Chalmers, 1992) and based on Boekarts (1997) research. The questionnaire instrument contained five sections – background information, goals, perceptions of study, participation in tutorial discussions and perceptions of usefulness of five learning settings on achieving learning goals. The findings of the study indicated that there were no gender differences in learning goals (goal scale values).

Lee, Park and Kim (2009) conducted a study on gender differences in international student adjustments with 76 Korean students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs at US universities. The study utilised an adapted version of Baker and Siryk’s (1989) Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire. Findings from the study indicated that females outperformed males academically and showed a higher level of adjustment. The authors suggest that a female ‘alpha psychology’ might apply to Korean females in the study who were less influenced by traditional gender roles.

The studies cited in this section are not conclusive about the interconnections between gender and adjustments. The differences between the religious and secular context of
APCs and CHCs, as well as the political environment, may influence gender differences. In APC societies, the cultural practice of gender segregation, particularly in KSA, is driven both socially and politically; thus it is plausible that the gender issue might be significant for KSA citizens. However, as studies in this area are minimal, and gender as a construct has not been studied in many HE institutions in relation to ISs, the influence of gender on ISs adjustments is uncertain.

**Summary of Key influences on ISs acculturation, adaptation and adjustment**

Figure 3.2 presents a summary of the information discussed in this chapter in relation to influences on ISs’ adaptation and adjustment. Figure 3.2 shows how the chapter is situated within the concepts of acculturation, adjustment and adaptation. A range of cross-cultural models were presented. Positioning theory and its association with personal agency and identity construction were then introduced. Key influences on ISs’ adjustment, in terms of EL proficiency, motivation (SRL and SDT), and gender were described.
Figure 3.3: Summary of Key Influences on ISs
Conclusion
This chapter has provided the start of a theoretical framework for the study. Cross-cultural models, the interconnections between language, culture and thought were described and the relevance to the current study was discussed. Positioning theory, the influence of personal agency and identity construction in relation to ISs was explained. The experience of adjusting to a host culture is “a maturing process” and requires the “opening of one’s potential universe” (Murphy-Lejeune, 2003, p. 113). Generally, the greater the cultural gap between the home and host countries, the greater the adjustment problems. Various studies have concluded that cultural adjustment issues lead to a high degree of psychological intensity with greater difficulties in gaining understanding of the host country, thus causing more difficulties with social interactions and a higher degree of social anxiety (Huntley, 1993; Searle & Ward, 1990; Smart, Volet & Ang, 2000; Ward & Kennedy, 1992). Key influences on ISs adjustments were described. The role of motivations is especially relevant and definitions of SRL and SDT were presented. These are important constructs in the current study, as post-structuralist research views ISs as agentic individuals. The role of EL proficiency was then described. The literature reviewed in this section articulates the notion that using a culturally deterministic view is simplistic, as various other influences shape ISs’ responses and adjustments to the host culture. The chapter concluded with an overview of studies relating to gender differences in the performance of ISs. Regardless of the differences in the academic contexts, ISs generally perform well academically as a result of their cognitive capacity or self-regulated and self-determined learning. The next chapter, Chapter 4, will add to the conceptual framework by providing specific descriptions of the cultural identities of ISs from APCs and CHCs.
CHAPTER FOUR
CULTURAL IDENTITIES OF APC AND CHC LEARNERS

Introduction
The purpose of this research was to explore and describe the experiences of ISs in adjusting to the Australian culture. This chapter presents an overview of research in relation to the cultural identities of APC and CHC learners. The first section discusses the cultural identity of APC learners and describes the role of Arabic and Islam in shaping the cultural identity of APC learners. The religious and political influence on KSA, Iraq and Iran is described, subsequent to which characteristics of APC education and the role of teachers and learners is explained. The second section describes the cultural identity of CHC learners. Chinese philosophies and thinking styles are described with a special focus on Confucianism. The Chinese Cultural Model of Learning and the characteristics of CHC education in terms of the roles of teachers and learners is also explained. The chapter finishes with the complete contextual and conceptual framework for the study.

Cultural identity of APC Learners
In any social system, culture serves as a perceptual framework that guides the interpretation of interactions and the construction of meanings (Cortazzi, 1990). Understanding national cultures can provide significant insights into students’ learning behaviours. While an awareness of cross-cultural issues increases appreciation of different cultures, cultural stereotypes can be misleading, as students are both different and unique.

This section will provide an insight into the cultural identity of the learners in this study who descend from countries which have a strong Islamic history. The Arab/Middle Eastern area is diverse and large, as is the Arabic-Persian population of the world. While half the participants from this study were from a Muslim background in the Middle East (KSA, Iraq and Iran), specific literature focussing on the learners from these countries is limited. Hence, reference will be made to studies which refer more generically to APC learners from the Middle East. As explained in Chapter One, Middle East is a geopolitical term used here purely for the purposes of providing a geographical reference. The term refers loosely to the conglomeration of countries physically situated
in the region, including Iran, which is culturally Persian as opposed to being Arab. There are certain commonalities across the Middle Eastern APC populations, but each specific geographical region has its own unique culture and history. These will be acknowledged and referred to as and when necessary.

In order to construct a thorough picture of APC learners, this section will incorporate information on the twin pillars of Arabic culture (Arabic and Islam), the interconnections between politics and religion in the region, and the influence of these elements on individual’s cultural identity and their learning. The roles of APC teachers and learners are also explained.

**Twin Pillars of Arabic Culture – Arabic and Islam**

In the context of this study, cultural identity is an image of the behaviours, beliefs and norms (i.e. culture) adopted and practiced by individuals and deemed appropriate to the members of particular ethnic groups (Ferdman, 1990). Arab culture is characterised as having large power distances, relatively strong uncertainty avoidance, high collectivism and moderate masculinity/femininity (Hofstede, 1991; 2001). Weir (1999) identified four paradigms of management practice (American, European, Japanese and Arabic) and noted that the Arab paradigm is rooted in the Islamic, social and political life of Arab countries. Arabs, being collectivist, have a strong sense of belonging to their group and cultural origins. They value their moral principles and cultural roots and typically sacrifice personal desires and aspirations for the good of the collective (Jandt, 2007; Richardson, 2004; Samovar, Portier & McDaniel, 2009). The collectivist construction of cultures in Arab societies is based on socialisation and adherence to cultural norms where the needs of the society are valued over the interests of the individual as personal autonomy or independent thoughts are given little or no value at all (Barakat, 1993).

Debate has ensued on whether the Arab world should be viewed as a single entity or in its individual, constituent parts. Some researchers have argued that the diversity of the region prevents a single classification (Ali & Wahabi, 1995; Sidani & Gardner, 2000). Other researchers believe that the shared beliefs of the region and its occupation of a large geographical region justify its study as a single unit leading to the use of the term ‘Arab culture’ (Dedoussis, 2004; Wilson, 1996). In this study, the term APC has been
used to refer to the participants’ countries of origin in an attempt to recognise the diversity of the region.

The spread of the Arabic language was a consequence of Arabisation, a response to European colonialism. The language was initially used both as a base for independence and as a bond to unite the Arab speaking world (Abu-Absi, 1981). Arabic is pivotal to the “way of life, the culture and cultural identities of its members” (Ahmed, 2011, p. 125). A defining characteristic of Arab culture is religion which has been identified as the dominant variable (Kalliny & Gentry, 2007; Shahin & Wright, 2004). Islam, a way of life as well as a religion, is believed to have shaped the culture of the Arab countries as Arabic language, social life and traditions are all rooted in the faith. The daily life of a Muslim is rooted in religious teachings. While a Muslim’s behaviour is not always a complete reflection of Islam (Kerawala, 2006), it is evident that Islam affects virtually every aspect of an Arab’s behaviour (Ali, Liu & Humedian, 2004). However, the political and economic systems of the Arab countries are also a mix of capitalism, socialism and secularism (Obeidat, Shannak, Masa’deh & Al-Jarrah, 2012). The Islamic faith, shaped by Muslims who come from diverse socio-ethnic and cultural backgrounds, carries with it implications for teaching and learning.

The interrelationship between politics and religion in the Arab world has cultural implications. Compared with other religions, Islam has a significant political orientation and power conception. In other words, Islam can be seen as providing states with the seat of power (Nasr, 1999). This is based on the Quran being the founding text and Islam its derivative. In this context, the seat of authority is Allah and the seat of power was occupied by Mohammad, his emissary, where power was not autonomous but conferred and dependent on Allah’s authority (Mozzafari & Vale, 1987). This forms the basis of every Muslim’s faith.

**Influence of Political Islam on KSA, Iran and Iraq**

The influence of political Islam varies from one society to another. If a regime recognises the authority of Allah as absolute and unique, the regime has adopted monism which is essentially religious. Monism refers to the thinking that “all parts of the Universe [are] created by God, but they all form an integrated whole” (Latifi, 2006, p. 2063). An example of the political embodiment of monism was Ayatollah Khomeini’s Iran (Latifi 2006; Mahdavi, 2005).
In a semi-monist model, the authority of Allah is absolute but the presence of a mediating element leads to a secularising tendency as evident in the Baath regimes in Iraq and Syria. The Baath regime in Iraq adopted a secular ideology which dominated Iraq for more than three decades (Halverson, Goodall & Corman, 2011). After a period of conflict during the political power of Saddam Hussein, Iraq is currently ruled by its Shiite majority.

The third model, the fusionist model, equates Allah with the people of the nation – as in the Libyan regime and the Mujāhidīn-ē Khalq in Iran. This dualist model derives its legitimacy from the seat of Islamic authority and that of another such as the nation of the tribe apparent in the features of the Saudi regime (Mozzafari & Vale, 1987). This is because the Saudi regime does not have a written constitution (with the exception of the Quran) and derives its legitimacy from its tribal structure as well as its Islamic faith (Mozzafari & Vale, 1987). Mozzafari and Vale (1987, p. 72) claim that the Saudi state is the product of the famous alliance of Dar‘iyya in 1744 AD which determined the essence of Saudi power as Islam, which is viewed as “the prime constitution of the regime” and the “active presence of tribalism”. Islam is, therefore, the foundation of life in KSA.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) – Religious and Political Influence of Islam
The religious orientation of KSA and the powerful political influence of Islam in the state are evident. KSA views itself as the world’s most pious Islamic state, the area where Islam was founded. The two holiest sites of the faith – Mecca and Medina – are located in KSA. The state is governed by a type of Sunni Islam called Wahhabism, which can be seen as Islam in its purest or extreme form (Rubin, 2011). The state has a ruling monarchy dealing with all political and financial matters and an ‘ulama’ or clergy which controls religious and judicial matters. KSA is significantly influenced by the Quran and Shariah (Islamic law). The daily life of a KSA citizen is strictly defined by the Wahhabi code, an interpretation based on Islamic texts which includes numerous prohibitions and requires the individual to perform a range of public activities (Niblock, 2006). The impact of the Wahhabi movement with its “rigidity, strictness and simplicity are in evidence in the past and present life of Saudi Arabia” (Niblock, 2006, p. 25). KSA citizens have to perform religious duties known as the five pillars of Islam. These include praying five times a day; strict observance of Ramadan (a month of fasting for
adult Arabic-Persian citizens); alcohol, pornography, gambling, movies and dancing are strictly forbidden and considered immoral; rigorous censorship of books and magazines; and segregation between the sexes. The rights of women in KSA are severely limited. Women are not allowed to venture into the public arena without a male escort or written permission from a male relative. KSA women have to cover themselves in the ‘abaya’ and are forbidden to drive (Rubin, 2011). The conservatism of KSA and the significant influence of Islam on everyday life of KSA citizens are apparent from the practices highlighted.

In keeping with its strong Islamic influence, KSA educational policy has a significant religious orientation with religion in Saudi Arabia “regarded as the bedrock of all educational decisions” (Jamjoon, 2010, p. 547). According to Tibi (1998), the very first education policy introduced in 1963 stated that education in KSA should be based primarily on the teaching of Islam, but the vision included an emphasis on secular subjects which were alongside and infused with Islamic teachings (Al-Zaid, 1981; Alsalloom cited in Elyas, 2011). However, Islamic teachings have been the primary emphasis with at least five to eight hours a week from primary through to higher education devoted to the study of the Quran, Islamic tradition, jurisprudence and theology (Jamjoon, 2010). The KSA education system emphasises the teaching of Islam, unification of the Arabic identity and the nationalism of KSA (Al-Haq & Smadi, 1999; Rugh, 2002). As religion is a constant point in the life of KSA citizens, it is the main motivating force governing their behavior and influences every aspect of their life.

Female education in KSA began with the establishment of a female section in the Ministry of Education in 1960. In the Islamic code, roles between males and females are clearly differentiated as the “male stands for status and the female for the home and morality itself” (Richardson, 2004, p. 433). In KSA society, rigid rules determine interactions between the sexes and segregations occurs in most areas of society, including education.

**Iran - Religious and Political Influence of Islam**

Iran is the only Shia religious state in the world, formed by the Constitution of 1979. While Iran shares commonalities with the other states in the Middle East, there are distinct differences, particularly in relation to the connections between politics and the Islamic faith. The modernisation of Iran can be traced back to Reza Khan’s rule (1921–
Religious authority in Iran was subverted with the ‘White Revolution’ in 1963 which instituted land reform, privatised government-owned businesses, gave women the right to vote, and established a widespread literacy program. Disturbed by the process of modernisation and fearing Western influence, Shia religious scholars initiated a boycott of the White Revolution which eventually led to the Iranian revolution in 1979 (Nafisi, 2001). This led to a radical return to Islam. Nafisi argues that the Iranian revolution transformed both the public and private lives of its citizens by deculturalising the society while reshaping it into a “very narrow narrative of Shi’ism” (2001, p. 423). The state has full authority over all forms of media and strictly controls information that is disseminated in schools. The most significant point about the revolution and the Islamisation of Iran is the “failure of the state to superimpose its image on society fully in spite of its use of all the instruments and measures at its disposal” (Nafisi, 2001, p. 423).

**Iraq - Religious and Political Influence of Islam**

Iraq’s history indicates connections between politics and Islam. Iraq has a strong Shia history, contrary to KSA which is largely Sunni. However, the Sunnis in Iraq form part of the ruling class, despite being a minority. For most of its history, Iraq was dominated by a Sunni minority, while the Shia majority was kept subordinate and persecuted, particularly by Saddam Hussein, Iraq’s infamous dictator who rose to power in 1979 (Rubin, 2011). Regardless, the Sunnis and the Shias coexisted and even intermarried. However, current day Iraq is ruled by a Shia-led government which has led to intra-Persian-Gulf conflict in the state (Rubin, 2011). Prior to the 1990s, Iraq seems to have had the best education system in the Middle East, leading the way in educational access, literacy and gender equality (Al-Janabi & Anderson, 2011; Walker, 2014). However, the Gulf wars and economic sanctions caused the decline of education in Iraq with loss of funding, infrastructure and brain drain (Walker, 2014). The interconnections between the political climate of Iraq and its education system are evident as involvements in wars caused education to become a lower priority.
Characteristics of APC/Islamic Education
Historically, education has always played an important role in the Arabian Peninsula, specifically from the time of Prophet Muhammad. In addition to acquiring the rudiments of reading and writing, Muhammad encouraged his followers to study religion and the provision of free education. The provision of free education had three main elements: education and religious knowledge were made compulsory in the Arabic-Persian world, there was an insistence on free education, and education and Arabic-Persian teaching was taught with a focus on stimulating original thinking and personal investigation (Kinany cited in Alqarni, 2015). Islamic knowledge was not the only focus of education. It was also the political application of religious values in everyday life. Religious and secular education were emphasised, which led to education in the Arab world developing along two main lines – traditional and formal. Halstead (2004, p. 522) argues that Islamic education has three main purposes: assisting with individual development, providing an understanding of society and its social and moral rules, and knowledge transmission.

While the purposes of education identified above are not peculiar to Islam, the fundamental importance is that all aspects of an APC person’s life are significantly influenced by Islam as “religion [is] at the heart of all education, acting as the glue which holds the entire curriculum into an integrated whole” (Halstead, 2004, p. 525). Islam forms the basis of education in the APC world, where the value of knowledge is in its contribution towards inculcating goodness, a moral and spiritual consciousness in the individual and the entire community (Halstead, 2004). APC individuals strive for personal spiritual growth which can be achieved by an acceptance and implicit trust in the authority of the learned in the community who possess knowledge and teach about the Quran and the Prophet.

Traditional learning in APCs, at the pre-school stage, was exclusively religious-based and took place either at home or at the local mosque (Tibi, 1998). The focus of education at this level was to develop understanding and knowledge of the Quran. As APC citizens need to recite their prayers from the Quranic verses, five times a day, memorisation was the key method of learning achieved primarily through oral transmission. The Islamic model of education is characterised by memorisation and recitation which is fundamentally different to the Western, secular model (Boyle, 2006; Hourani, Diallo & Said, 2011; Labidi, 1992).
The tradition of memorisation continued into contemporary higher education in Arab societies which saw the teacher as a formidable force. The teacher was viewed as the examinations authority and a surrogate parent (Jamjoon, 2010). These two contrary roles shaped the learning behaviours of Arab students – taking copious notes of all that was uttered by the teacher and memorisation of the information for regurgitation in exams (Boyle, 2006; Dagher & BouJaoude, 2011; Labidi, 1992). Thus, teaching and learning were primarily geared towards the final exam (Masri, 2009). However, Boyle (2006) argues that the use of memorisation strategies is the first step towards understanding and is associated with exercising reason. At this juncture, it must be recognised that there is a move to reform the education system and adopt more student-centred pedagogies in the Arab world (BouJaoude, Salloum & Abd-El-Khalick, 2004; El-Baz, 2007; Nashwan, 1993; 1996).

**Role of APC Teachers**

Teaching in Arab cultures is seen as a noble profession endowing the teacher with a high status. From its beginning with Prophet Muhammad, the teaching profession in Islamic cultures was regarded as a religious duty (Labidi, 1992). The high esteem of educators in Arabic-Persian/Islamic cultures is derived from their education in the moral tradition, based on clearly-defined cultural and religious mores (Jamjoon, 2010). Three moral contexts provide an insight into the identity of the teacher in Arabic/Islamic cultures: their relationship to the institution and their professional identity, their traditional and societal identity, and their choices in the classroom and moral outcome of their choices (Picard, 2013).

The teacher is viewed as a descendant of Prophet Muhammad, the ultimate teacher of morals and values, which made the teacher an embodiment of Muhammad’s teachings (Elyas & Picard, 2010). The teacher is considered the absolute patriarchal authority in the classroom with undisputed authority derived from God/Allah (Ward, 2009). The teacher is not only considered the source of knowledge but also the imposing figure of moral authority and discipline (Elyas & Basalamah, 2012). As such, ensuring respect and obedience for the teacher was of paramount importance.

Teaching in APCs is based on the traditional, didactic model. Teachers and religious leaders deliver their material orally, encouraging the development of passive listening in
their students (Eickelman, 1992; Hall, 2011), with a focus on learning to pass exams as the primary goal (Alabbad & Gitsaki, 2011; Chang, 2002). Students are seen as recipients of information. Traditionally, the lecturer would squat on a platform against a pillar with one or two circles of students sitting before him, listening to the teachers. Scholars were venerated and highly respected in keeping with the Islamic view of all knowledge as sacred (Elyas & Picard, 2010). The teacher in Arab societies is respected as the “master” of exams in Arab society (Labidi, 1992, p. 79). This role has changed little as teaching in Arab cultures is primarily “didactic, teacher-directed” and “teachers communicate in classrooms using text-books that contain ostensibly indisputable knowledge” (Faour & Muasher, 2011, p. 5). The use of student-centered pedagogies was not considered to be necessary or appropriate (Hall, 2011). As a consequence of this, Hall (2011) claims that contemporary Arabic students receive an outdated form of education prior to entry into a Western university.

For students, APC classroom conduct is governed by rules and regulations, such as how to ask questions and participate in classroom events, and an explicit moral code which all students are obliged to obey (Jackson, 1997). The teacher’s role in the classroom is to treat their students as empty vessels and ‘fill’ them with “deposits of information” (Richardson, 2004, p. 433). Therefore, the ‘moral code’ is that the teacher imparts knowledge and the student cultivates “the quietness of loving to listen” (Jamjoon, 2010, p. 7).

The different cultures in the APC region have distinctive characteristics in regards to the role of the teacher. KSA practices an extremist culture and is ultra-conservative, which appears to have influenced the role of the teacher in that society (Faour & Muasher, 2011). In contrast, Iran has adopted a modernisation program since the reign of Reza Khan (1921 – 41). Yet, the teacher in Iranian society is still the giver of information with the student as the passive recipient (Safi, 1992). Moghaddas and Zakeri (2012) claim that the atmosphere in Iran is dominated by modernism ideas, but the educational system and the classroom environment are still conservative. This is also similar to the teaching and learning environment in Iraq with the difference being that war and economic sanctions has caused education to become less of a priority.
Role of APC Learners

As the role of the teacher is that of knowledge-giver, the concomitant role of the student is to be a passive recipient. Memorisation and rote learning is an integral part of the learning traditions in Arabic cultures and many national universities in APCs conduct mass lectures with significant emphasis on rote memorisation (Elyas, 2011). Reciting poetry and verses from the Holy Quran was seen as the highest achievement an Arabic student could attain (Elyas & Picard, 2010).

The learner from the Arab world has fundamental difficulties with independent learning, critical thinking and knowledge application as rote memorisation and drilling are the main teaching pedagogies to which they have been exposed. As Faour and Muasher (2011, p. 5) claim: “Assessment of student learning relies on memorization of definitions, facts, and concepts rather than the ability to think critically”. In APCs, asking questions is considered a sign of ignorance; thus, students do not generally ask questions. Questioning the material, especially that written by authoritative experts, is foreign to APC learners who have obtained good grades previously based on rote memorisation (Dagher & BouJaode, 2011; Lewis, 2010). However, Jamjoon (2010) points out that discussion does occur and has done so even in the early Quranic schools. By the end of the discussion, which is conducted within strict parameters, the students are obliged to accept the validity of the teacher’s knowledge and argument. Richardson (2004, p. 433) claims the learner-centred paradigm, which expects students to be independent and work in partnership with the teacher, is a foreign notion to APC learners because “individual growth is seen as a concept which could cause disharmony within the family”. Scholars describe Middle Eastern pedagogy, particularly in public institutions, as consisting of lectures, rote-learning and dictation (Chadraba & O’Keefe, 2007; Richards, 1992; Tubaishat, Bhatti & El-Qawasmeh, 2006). Teaching in this context is content-focused and involves illustrating concepts and reading from textbooks with assessments being heavily reliant on examinations which encourages passive-absorption of knowledge (Burt, 2004; Russell, 2004).

Critical thinking skills, required to keep up with the demands of the labour market, are not emphasised in the Arab world (Abi-Mershed, 2009). However, such skills are considered necessary in order for the Middle East to build ‘an Arab knowledge society’ (Bindé & Matsuura, 2005). The lack of attention to critical thinking in the Arab school curricula is documented by World Bank reports (2002; 2008). The reports emphasised
teachers appear to lack knowledge on teaching strategies related to critical thinking, which explains the lack of critical thinking pedagogy in the curricula (Bataineh & Alazzi, 2009), despite the historical use of analogical reasoning in Islamic law during the medieval Islamic period, showing that inquisitive and rational thinking was part of the culture (Hasan, 2000). The critical thinking component seems to have disappeared in the current context of education in the Arab world (El-Baz, 2007; Hourani, Diallo & Said, 2011).

The lack of critical thinking can be explained by the dominance of memorisation of the Quran. The process of memorisation excludes “the possibility of subjecting these [Quranic] beliefs to rational critical investigation, which might erode their certainty … it does not allow for knowledge to be open to revision when new evidence comes to light that challenges its reality” (Halstead, 2004, p. 527). In the Islamic model of education, learning is almost exclusively focussed on the principle of “tafakkur”, thinking in the perspective of the Quran and accepting every Islamic truth (Hourani, Diallo & Said, 2011). Islamic beliefs highlight there is only one absolute truth (al-haqaqa al-mutlaqa) which dominates teaching pedagogies and practices (Halstead, 2004). Thus, Arab students hold teachers responsible for classroom learning and expect to be given the information they are required to learn (Ellili & Chaffin, 2007).

The Arab world and Arab culture is currently undergoing serious changes and debates (Abu-Hilal, Aldhafri, Al-Bahrani & Kamali, 2016). This is evident in Raddawi’s (2011) critical thinking mixed-methods survey on 200 students, (of which 180 were Arabs) at a private United Arab Emirates (UAE) university. Participants were enrolled in an Advanced Academic Writing course which aimed to develop students’ critical thinking and academic writing competencies. Raddawi (2011) concluded that the role of the teacher had changed considerably in recent years, particularly from 2011. The teacher was perceived as a mentor, collaborator and advisor, not just an instructor. These findings are different to Labidi’s view that Arab students are used to teachers who “dictate” and not those who “direct” (1992, p. 85). The survey results indicated that students took their teacher’s viewpoint into consideration in topic selection, reflecting excessive control on the part of the teacher. The different findings between the studies by Labidi (1992) and Raddawi (2011) indicate changes are occurring in the APC world. In most APCs, there is a definite over-emphasis on teacher centred methodologies and information dissemination (Dagher & BouJaode, 2011). As a consequence, learners are
encouraged to adopt rote-memorisation strategies and “the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, inquiry and investigative skills” are neglected (Dagher & BouJaode, 2011, p. 88).

APC learner’s overreliance on memorisation makes them unprepared for independent learning and critical thinking (Al-Qaysi & Shabdin, 2016). Ellili and Chaffin (2007) argue that the traditional teaching methodologies adopted in APCs does not favour autonomous learning, while Richardson emphasised APC students as having a “passive, teacher-centred learning style ... waiting for instructions” with a “spoon-fed orientation” (2006, p. 111). However, other studies present an alternate view which indicates APC learners have capacity for independent learning. APC students’ ability for autonomous learning was indicated in a descriptive study (Hobrom, 2004) of five second semester students at a major US university. Data was collected through interviews with students and their instructors, as well as a study of documents such as written journals and class syllabi. Students were found to perceive themselves as autonomous learners in terms of taking more responsibility and being highly motivated. The differences in the findings of the two studies might indicate a distinction between adaptability when studying inside and outside the home country.

Almansouri’s (2014) doctoral thesis (submitted to the University of Queensland) on the academic and social adjustments of Arabic international students (AIS) highlights the challenges faced by this cohort of ISs. The mixed method study, involving both undergraduates and postgraduates from a range of Australian universities and private tertiary providers, used Hofstede’s national dimensions to make cultural comparisons between Australia and AIS’. The first step of the study involved 32 academics and 69 AIS who were asked to complete an online survey. Qualitative data in the form of semi-structured interviews was obtained from six students and seven academics. The student participants originated from a variety of Arab countries with the highest numbers being from Iraq (23%), KSA (19%) and Libya (15%). Almansouri concluded that EL issues were significant, as was the need to reconceptualise teaching and learning from teacher-centeredness to autonomous learning. Participants were eventually able to adapt to constructivist teaching approaches but encountered significant challenges in the process.

APC students’ attitudes towards memorisation indicate their ability to use metacognitive strategies. A study was conducted in Qatar (Eslami, Al-Buainain & Tzou,
2009) with 25 female Arab students enrolled in twinning education programs between a Texan (US) and Qatari university. The study, which used the self-report questionnaire Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), showed that memorisation was the least favoured learning strategy among students (Eslami et al., 2009). Similarly, Aljuaid’s (2015) mixed method doctoral study of learners of English as a Foreign Language at a KSA university concluded that memorisation was the least used learning strategy while metacognitive strategies were the most highly used. Quantitative data was obtained from 630 participants through the SILL and 11 semi-structured interviews were conducted. The studies indicate APC learners have the propensity to develop different learning strategies.

The studies reviewed here indicate that APC learners should be seen as unique individuals, not just a product of a particular culture with a fixed cultural identity. Studies cited in this section from different countries indicate that APC students have the potential to develop a broad range of skills. More importantly, recent studies cited in this section suggest that APC academic culture is changing as evident in the Education for All Regional Report 2012 for Arab States (UNESCO, 2012). The report highlighted the need for reform and change to occur in the Arab world. In particular, the report stated, “investing in education reform today to encourage responsible citizenship will make all the difference for positive changes for the region” (UNESCO, 2012, p. 5). While there are differences among APCs in regards to their educational, political, economic and social systems, certain key similarities are evident. These include rapid growth of access to educational institutions, significant growth in literacy both for males and females, governmental control and financing of most education, emergence of Western-style institutions, continuation of religious-based institutions, and limited study abroad (Rugh, 2002).

**Summary**

This section has reviewed literature pertaining to the cultural identity of APC learners. Characteristics of the countries of origin of participants have been provided, including a description of the teaching and learning environment and salient characteristics of APC learners and teachers. Understanding APC education is challenging as research in this area is limited; however, efforts are being made to rectify this situation particularly by UNESCO (2012). The current curriculum reform taking place in APC nations appears to be moving towards the development of creative and critical thinking (Aarts &
Nonneman, 2005). The next section provides information on the cultural identity of CHCs.

**Cultural identity of the CHC learner**

This section provides an insight into the Chinese cultural framework which can be used to enhance understanding of learning behaviours of CHC students. This section begins by describing CHC philosophies and thinking styles, with a deliberate focus on Confucianism which is an instrumental aspect of Chinese culture. The Chinese cultural model of learning is described, followed by an outline of the Chinese teaching and learning environment. A definition of the Chinese learner is presented and distinguishes between the singular and plural perspectives of Chinese learners. The role of the teacher in Chinese classrooms is then described. Characteristics of the Chinese learning styles are presented including rote-learning, silent learning, deference to authority, and passive learning. The section concludes with discussion of the paradox of Chinese learners. The current study adopts the post-modernist perspective which provides a discursive construction of Chinese learners who are dynamic with a strong sense of personal agency. The cultural framework outlined in this section serves as a base for enhancing understanding.

**CHC Philosophies and Thinking Styles**

To understand the complexities of Chinese thinking it is necessary to understand the dominant ancient Chinese philosophies of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism which appear to have a major role in shaping the thinking of contemporary Chinese people. These philosophies are relevant in constructing the wider political, sociocultural environment of Chinese learning behaviours.

**Buddhism**

Buddhism is a belief system which emphasises the impermanence of the law of non-contradictions where the universe is in constant flux and all phenomena within it are continually changing forms and properties. It is the tolerance of multiple truths and paradoxical propositions that contradicts Aristotelian logic (Ji, Lee & Guo, 2010).
**Taoism**

Taoism believes in ‘yin-yang’ or the law of identity. This Chinese philosophy emphasises the role of relationships in discovering the ‘truth’. Taoism is in contrast to Greek philosophies which believe that the truth can only be understood when the problem is analysed step by step in isolation from its context (Ji, Lee & Guo, 2010).

**Confucianism**

Scholars argue that Confucianism is at the heart of Chinese culture (Crookes & Thomas, 1998; Nield, 2004). Confucianism is based on the teachings of Confucius and is a behavioral and moral doctrine which spells out the rules for each level of human interaction. Some authors claim that Chinese children are indoctrinated into these rules of behaviour even though there is no direct reference to Confucian texts (Crookes & Thomas, 1998). Nield (2004) postulates that Confucianist rules impact on the education and learning, teaching and assessment preferences of Chinese students.

Confucianism is a set of lucid interpretations of the law of nature and a set of unambiguous moral guidelines (Berger, 2008; Hansen 2000). It is not a religion but a set of pragmatic rules for daily living developed by Confucius based on lessons gained from history (Hofstède & Bond, 1988). Confucius was first and foremost a teacher who aimed to produce individuals who were both educated and moral in order to contribute to society and eventually attain sagehood. A key tenet of his teachings was the meaning of humanity which was seen as a “communal act” as opposed to an isolated individual act (Tu, 1993, p. 12). This explains the collectivistic tradition in Chinese culture. Confucianism claims that one’s existence is defined by countless interpersonal connections in one’s social matrix and is based on the doctrine of the mean or “zhong yong” (Ji, Lee & Guo, 2010, p. 159). The philosophy places high regard for academic achievement and espouses values such as striving to achieve family status, providing the best learning environment for children, emphasising effort and practice, believing in persistence to obtain success, and upholding high standards of excellence (Wu, 1996; Lin, 2007). These values are an intrinsic aspect of CHC cultural identity.

The combination of the above values explains CHC students’ attitudes to learning and academic performance. Close examination of Confucius’ teaching shows reasoning and questioning are highly valued. Confucius taught by example and encouraged his
disciples to learn through asking, listening and observing. He believed in equal access to education, practiced a student-centered approach and encouraged peer learning (Ng, 2000). His teachings imply a social purpose in learning and education. Ng (2000) explains that Confucian pedagogy is not fundamentally different to modern teaching practices. Ng (2000) is of the view that Confucius developed teaching pedagogies which indicate contextualised one-on-one teaching and field trips. Research which ignores the social aspect of Confucianism is misleading and does not provide a thorough picture of the Chinese learner (Ng, 2000).

The influence of the Confucian collectivistic tradition appears to be diametrically opposed to the Socratic individualist influence in Western society. The core Confucian values, as identified above, seem to be opposed to the five principles of student motivation as seen from the Western social-cognitive perspective. These five principles are adaptive self-efficacy and competence, adaptive attributions and control beliefs, higher levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, achievement goals which motivate and direct students, and higher levels of achievement which motivate students (Pintrich, 2003). In the context of the Western classroom, CHC learners are characterised as silent, obedient, passive learners who do not engage in critical thinking, as these learners are viewed and benchmarked from a Western lens.

Although Chinese learners have their cultural roots in Confucianism, there is little consensus among scholars on the nature and interpretations of Confucianism (Chang, 2000; Gieve & Clark, 2005; Hofstède & Bond, 1988). The philosophy itself has evolved and is dynamic and adaptable. The controversy around Confucianism stems from the belief that the philosophy encouraged passive learning. However, some scholars argue that in its original form, Confucianism actually encouraged learners to be active. For example, Gieve and Clark (2005) criticise the view that Confucian beliefs have led to obedient and reticent Chinese students and caution against the adoption of a deficit model of thinking and learning. Scholars have discussed the congruence between Confucianism and newer ways of thinking which emphasise reflection and understanding (Lee, 1996; Shi, 2006; Watkins, 1996). Lee (1996), similar to Biggs (1990), argues that Confucius advocated deep learning as opposed to rote-learning, as he encouraged societal ‘enlightenment’. This is evident as Confucius believed that “seeing knowledge without thinking is labour lost; thinking without seeking knowledge is perilous” (Analects II.15 cited in Lee, 1996, p. 34). In addition, Confucius advocated
that learning is a process of “studying extensively, enquiring carefully, pondering thoroughly, sifting clearly, and practising earnestly” (The Mean, XX.19 quoted in Lee, 1996, p. 35). From these ideas, scholars argue that the Confucian method of learning is essentially a Socratic exercise, encouraging an intrinsic appreciation of learning.

To adequately understand Chinese learners, the influence of ‘vernacular Confucianism’, or the way in which Confucianism is interpreted and implemented by the average Chinese person today, must be examined. Vernacular Confucianism includes the value of education for family development, accumulation of knowledge through memorisation, the importance of effort and beliefs related to achievement, and collectivist values (Chang, 2000).

However, scholars also point out the apparent paradox in contemporary Chinese classrooms which practice the opposite of the expository method. Some scholars argue that a scrutiny of the Chinese context explains this paradox and believe that the Cultural Revolution had attempted to purge mainland Chinese society of traditional cultural values (Lee, 1996, Saravanamuthu, 2008). In fact, Saravanamuthu claims that while the Cultural revolution made education more accessible to the working class, it also “resulted in a shift from the Confucianist ethos of education for education’s sake to the contemporary views which range from surface to deep learning” (2008, p. 152). Furthermore, as Watkins and Biggs (2001) explain, Chinese classrooms have large class sizes (up to 60 students) and are not adequately financed by Western standards (Gao & Watkins, 2010; Li, 2011). The educational system is also oriented towards examinations as tertiary opportunities are limited. Finally, unlike their Western counterparts, Chinese teachers seldom praise their students except for outstanding performance. The paradox of the Chinese classroom is evident in the punishments meted out to disobedient students in the classroom ranging from ridicule and shaming to physical punishment in an attempt to manage large classes (Ho, 1981; Yeung, 2015). However, studies also indicate that despite the large class sizes, Chinese teachers are able to interact more closely with their students and form close teacher-student bonds compared with student-centered learning approaches in Western classrooms (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992; Wachob, 2000).

Confucianism has significantly influenced Chinese educational philosophy and learning traditions, particularly values of respect for authority, diligence and pragmatic
acquisition of knowledge (Sit, 2013). The Confucian respect for authority and view of scholars as knowledgeable figures to be respected is transferred to teachers in the classroom. The student is understanding of this hierarchical relationship and behaves subserviently, rarely questioning or challenging the teacher’s authority (Hofstède, 2001; Pratt, Kelly & Wong, 1999; Sit, 2013). Jin and Cortazzi refer to a ‘culture of learning’ which:

frames what teachers and students expect to happen in classrooms and how participants interpret the format of classroom instruction, the language of teaching and learning, and how interaction should be accomplished as part of the social construction of an educational discourse system. (2006, p. 9)

The key influence in the Chinese culture of learning is Confucianism, which emphasises the role of the teacher as an authority figure akin to a parent. This is a sustainable generalisation, as the impact of Confucianism on Chinese culture, especially the teaching and learning environment, is well-documented (Cortazzi & Jin, 2001; Gao & Watkins, 2002; Li, 2002; Watkins & Biggs, 2001). Jin and Cortazzi (1998) argue that even the Chinese are sometimes unaware of how significantly Confucianism influences their behaviours.

The studies cited in this section indicate the contrary views of scholars on the Chinese teaching and learning environment and the relevance of Confucianism. Some argue that regardless of the extent to which Confucianism has impacted on current Chinese thinking, CHC learners would be expected to respect legitimate authority based on age and position and may discount concepts regarding attributes of leaders (Berrell, Wrathell & Wright, 2001). Of relevance to this study is Hofstède’s concept of ‘Confucian dynamism’, referring to core values of persistence and “respect for tradition” from the teachings of Confucius as core values held by the Chinese (Hofstède & Bond, 1988, p. 19). As Barker (1997) notes, Hofstède’s (1991) research is based on central tendencies of the countries he surveyed rather than individual preferences, but these are important in providing an insight into the social systems which shape the values, beliefs, expectations and behaviours of the students from which they come. This construct is relevant to the current study as Chinese learners are influenced by the values of Confucianism. In order to obtain insights into the Chinese teaching and learning environment, it is necessary to describe Chinese thinking styles, the focus of the next section.
Studies on Chinese thinking styles show that the major schools of Chinese philosophies such as Buddhism, Taosim and Confucianism play an important role in shaping thoughts. The central concept to understanding Chinese thinking lies in “zhong yong” or the “doctrine of the mean” which encapsulates the virtues of pursuing the middle ground (Ji, Lee & Guo, 2010, p. 158). To some extent, this explains the Chinese tendency to agree with the views of others so as not to cause any disharmony. In the classroom, this manifests itself primarily in group discussions where Chinese students tend to assume a conciliatory attitude, often mistaken for passivity by Westerners. Scholars differ on their conceptions of the characteristics of Chinese learners, but common characteristics have been identified as typical. While these stereotypes are acknowledged, the current study aligns itself with post-modernist research which focuses on the unique identity of learners and the dynamism of identity construction.

The Chinese ‘midway’ (zhong yong) thinking advocates moderation and modesty in the interest of achieving and maintaining interpersonal harmony. This concept is central to understanding the ways Chinese people navigate themselves in interpersonal relationships (Ji, Lee & Guo, 2010; Kwan, Hui & McGee, 2012). Due to this principle, Chinese people are expected to adopt a compromising approach (Ji, Lee & Guo, 2010). Thus, the Chinese style of thinking favours a holistic approach in processing information which involves attending to the entire field, accepting contradictions and non-linear change (Ji, Lee & Guo, 2010). This is different to North Americans and Europeans, including Australians, who tend to rely on an analytical framework that emphasises the use of logic and one-to-one relationships (Li, 2009; Ji, Lee & Guo, 2010). Table 4.1 highlights the different aspects of analytic thinking common to Westerners and holistic thinking predominant to the Chinese. The contrast between the Western and Chinese style of thinking provides an insight into the different cultural heritages of the two societies, especially as it may influence learning behaviours. While Table 4.1 identifies some of these differences, caution must be exercised in making generalisations.
Table 4.1: Comparison Between Western Analytic and Chinese Holistic Thinking (adapted from Ji, Lee & Guo, 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytic Thinking (European/North American)</th>
<th>Holistic Thinking (Chinese)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extract underlying properties of an object of phenomenon from its context.</td>
<td>Nothing exists in isolation; everything is interrelated either directly or indirectly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largely based on Platonic philosophy – social information should be defined and</td>
<td>Contemplation is the main mode of thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organised on the basis of their inherent qualities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peripheral details are unreliable sources in the understanding of true forms.</td>
<td>Objects are defined in terms of their connectedness with their contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argumentation is based on decontextualisation and concerns the abstract, universal</td>
<td>Knowledge is organised in a thematic, relational fashion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>representation of ideas and statements.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truthfulness (validity and soundness) of an argument requires the logical</td>
<td>Dynamics among the elements rather than elements themselves which are primary units of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evaluation of its pure structure and not of its context.</td>
<td>analysis in holistic thinking.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Chinese thinking tends to be more inductive than deductive (Kirkpatrick, 1997). Deductive reasoning moves from a general idea or set of facts to a particular idea or set of facts. In this style of thinking, the main thesis is presented at the beginning and support mentioned after the thesis. This is typical of most Western styles of thinking. In contrast, inductive reasoning uses known facts to present general laws. In this context, support for the thesis is presented before the thesis is explicitly stated. These different styles of thinking may explain the polarities in thinking styles between Chinese and Western cultures. The next section presents the Chinese Cultural Model of Learning in order to explain the Chinese way of thinking in the classroom context.

The Chinese Cultural Model of Learning
Learner beliefs in Western and Chinese contexts appear to be diametrically opposed. Some students, such as those from Asian cultures, tend to view learning as the absorption of knowledge (Kennedy, 2002; Chan, 2009). Conversely, those from Western cultures tend to view learning as a means of knowledge construction and problem solving (Chan & Sachs, 2001; Lonka, Joram, & Bryson, 1996; Marton, Dall’Alba, & Beaty, 1993). Generally speaking, students who adopt active learning approaches achieve higher levels of academic success than those who adopt surface approaches to learning (Chan, 2001; Chan, Burtis, & Bereiter, 1997). Concepts such as reasoning, inquiry and objective knowledge do not appear to be part of Chinese learning behaviours, while learning attitudes of personal effort, endurance of hardship, perseverance, concentration and humility are not part of the Western learning traditions.
(Covington, 1992). Thus, conflict arises when students, from a culture which is focused on different values, are confronted by a completely different value system.

In the Western academic tradition, it is a widely held belief that speaking and interaction promotes learning and most research carried out on Asian students in the Western world hold these assumptions as the basis for study. Kim (2002) argues that Western assumptions and the processes of learning efficacies, as determined by Western values, cannot and should not be readily applied to non-Western students. Non-Western students need to be studied on their own merits and not viewed from a Western lens. Kim’s (2002) study, based on three psychological tests and experiments with 34 Asian-American and 41 European-American students at Stanford University in the US, provides insights into the thinking and speaking habits of both cohorts of students. The study found that European-American students were more likely to believe that speaking enhances learning, while Asian-American students perceived speaking to be an interference on their ability to perform tasks. This finding highlights a fundamental cultural difference suggesting that Western assumptions should not be imposed on non-Western students. Research on non-Western students should not be dominated by Western thinking and should take cross-cultural factors into consideration. In doing this, researchers will gain greater insights into the thinking and learning behaviours of students within their respective cultural contexts as studies would then place less emphasis on the differences between Western and non-Western cultures.

Li’s (2002) Chinese Cultural Model of Learning, presented in Figure 4.1, describes students’ learning behaviours in specific cultural contexts. The model comprises four broad dimensions: purpose, agency, affect and achievement. The model was developed from two studies comparing the learning cultures and beliefs of European Americans and Chinese college students. Sixty two students from each culture were involved in the data collection process which used prototype methods to collect learning lexicons used in English and Chinese daily life and written images. Chinese participants were recruited from Chinese rural and city universities. Qualitative and quantitative analysis was used to build a model which distinguished between American and Chinese learning cultures. As the data collection consisted of word associations, Li (2002; 2009) identified two conceptual maps. Two sets of concepts were identified for European Americans – the learning process and individual characteristics. In contrast, three basic sets of concepts emerged for the Chinese map – a heart and mind for learning, purpose
of learning, and achievement standards. Li (2016) used the same comparative approach to study the learning beliefs of pre-school children from European American and Chinese backgrounds and explored their socialisation experiences. The study concluded that the Chinese Cultural Model of Learning was still relevant and appropriate to understand Chinese and American learning cultures.

![Chinese Cultural Model of Learning](image)

Figure 4.1: Chinese Cultural Model of Learning (Li, 2009, p. 49)

Each of these four broad dimensions and their subcomponents will be discussed briefly as they apply to the current study. The first dimension of the Chinese Cultural Model of Learning is ‘Purpose’, and consists of five subcomponents. Foremost among these is the need to perfect oneself morally, an attitude influenced by the Confucian teaching of ‘ren’, “the lifelong striving to become the most genuine, sincere and humane person that one can be” (Li, 2009, p 50). As ren is not innate but developed, Li (2009) argues that Chinese students aim to develop themselves morally by engaging in the learning process, thus developing their great learning as opposed to skill learning (Lee, 1996; Li, 2003, 2009). The second purpose of learning in CHCs is to achieve a cognitive goal. The aim is to acquire knowledge and skills for one’s individual purpose in order to
understand the functioning of the natural and social worlds. Third, Chinese learners aim to establish themselves economically with education seen as a means of attaining financial and career success. Chinese learners desire to achieve social status and honour which is related to financial achievement. Finally, in keeping with Confucian traditions of the higher purpose of learning related to moral and social obligations to society, Chinese learners aim to contribute to society. From the Chinese learner perspective, learning is not just an individual and personal matter; it is linked to society and the commonwealth of which one is a part (Cheng, 2011; Li, 2002, 2009; Wu & Lai, 1992). The purposes of learning are interrelated as the Chinese view both the higher goals of contributing to society and the pursuit of individual socio-economic goals as being complementary rather than contradictory. In contrast, the learning purposes of American students centre around development of the mind and understandings of the world (Li, 2009).

The next dimension of the Chinese Cultural Model of Learning is ‘Agency and Learning Virtues’. This is an intentional human act and in the learning area refers to how an individual plans, selects and develops learning goals through a process of self-regulation (Bandura, 2006; Zimmermann & Schunk, 2003). In other words, personal agency refers to an individual learner’s personal learning goals and motivation. Most research defines the Chinese learner as passive, deferent to authority, lacking initiative and creativity, and aiming to learn in order to please their parents rather than being intrinsically motivated (Kim, 2002; Pratt et al., 1999; Tweed & Lehmann, 2002). This implies that CHC learners do not have a strong sense of personal agency. However, Li’s study shows that Chinese students have a sense of personal agency which underlies their learning virtues or morally good and desirable dispositional qualities (Li, 2009). Five learning virtues were identified – resolve, diligence, endurance of hardship, perseverance and concentration. The five learning virtues form a coherent whole in the learning process of the Chinese student and encompass their learning behaviours which can only be sustained through a desire to learn. Comparatively, the American notions of learning were more task-oriented showing that beliefs of the two cultures differ significantly in relation to agency and learning virtues (Li, 2009).

The next dimension of the Chinese Cultural Model of Learning refers to ‘Achievement Standards’, which Chinese learners aim for and against which they are measured. These include depth and breadth and/or mastery of knowledge, application of knowledge and
unity of knowledge and moral character. CHC learners adopt a continuous process of moral and social self-perfection requiring a constant need for knowledge, reflection and application of knowledge in real life, to contribute to a collective good (Li, 2009; 2013). In contrast, American learners appear to be individualist in their learning and seek knowledge for specific understanding of subjects, aiming to acquire expertise in specific areas with an emphasis on individual achievement and brilliance (Li, 2009).

Finally, the Chinese Cultural Model of Learning identifies four types of ‘Affect’, which can be positive or negative. The four positive affect types (commitment, passion/thirst for learning, respect, and humility) identify the attitudes of CHC learners in the classroom as being committed to learning with a passion for learning, similar to the intrinsic motivation of American students. Respect is an instrumental aspect of Chinese learning and is based on the Confucian thought of learning as having moral and social aspects. This explains the respect CHC students have towards knowledge and teachers. The respectful, deferent CHC learner is not necessarily lacking in critical thinking skills. CHC learners are respectful due to their humility which is regarded as a personal strength. CHC learners believe that an individual can always improve themselves as long as they are willing to learn humbly and respectfully from others (Li, 2009; Li & Wang, 2004).

The respectful and humble aspects of CHC learners are markedly different to the challenging stance adopted by the American learner, particularly in classroom discussions. CHC learners are governed by a belief that thorough understanding of a topic is required prior to plunging into discussions, which explains the Chinese learner’s reluctance to participate actively in classroom discussions. In addition, Chinese learners are conscious of ‘face’, which means that they do not want to cause embarrassment either to themselves or others (Li, Wang & Fischer, 2004). However, the participants in Li’s (2009) study indicated that challenging old knowledge in order to advance new knowledge was an important goal.

Of the three negative affect types highlighted in the model (lack of desire, arrogance, shame and guilt), the most significant is that of shame and guilt. Shame is a prevalent emotion in Chinese culture concomitant with disgrace and humiliation, but it is a moral discretion and a sensibility that people desire to develop (Fung, 1999; Fung, Carr & Chan, 2001). This leads CHC learners to constantly improve themselves in recognition
of their inadequacies.

The model highlighted in Figure 4.1 provides a description of the Chinese learning approach at the cultural level and is not necessarily an individual learning model. As Li (2009) explains, the model is derived from Chinese culture and Chinese language with all its associated values and beliefs. While it has limited applicability beyond the Chinese culture, the model provides a comprehensive insight into Chinese learners’ beliefs and is particularly useful for the current study which examines learning experiences of CHC learners. The model encompasses both the pragmatic and altruistic purposes of learning held by the Chinese and shows the influence of Confucianism on some of these values. Li’s studies (2002; 2009; 2016) provide a comparative perspective and identify the differences between the learning cultures of Americans and the Chinese which can be generalised to Western and non-Western cultures. The differences identified in Li’s studies (2002; 2009; 2016) can result in stress and confusion for learners from different cultures, impacting on their academic performance.

CHC Academic Environment
Chinese thinking is reflected in the cultural and social setting, of which the classroom is an example. This section describes the salient aspects of the CHC academic environment, followed by an explanation of the roles of CHC teachers and learners.

Teaching and learning can be viewed as having two conceptions – a hierarchical and horizontal conception (Cortazzi & Jin, 2001). In the hierarchical conception, the teacher is the all-knowing entity and students are the passive recipients (Chan, 1999). The second conception, resembling a horizontal line, shows an egalitarian relationship between the teacher and the student (Sit, 2013). In this context, the student builds their independent thinking and is an active participant in all discussions. While the latter is typical of Western classroom environments, the hierarchical line is representative of the Chinese classroom.

The Chinese classroom is characterised by emphasis on content delivery and mastery for the purposes of exam achievement. Due to the textbook/examination centred nature of the Chinese classroom, the roles of the teacher and learner are clearly delineated. The teacher is an authoritarian figure and the learner is passive and silent (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Gao & Watkins, 2002; Starr, 2012; Wang, Andre & Greenwood, 2015).
Table 4.2 summarises the key characteristics of Chinese teachers and learners as derived from various studies (Gao & Watkins, 2002; Jin & Cortazzi, 1998; 2001; Kennedy, 2002; Kim 2002; Pratt et al., 1999). Table 4.2 is explained in detail in the following sections which provide further information on teacher and learner roles in the Chinese classroom.

### Table 4.2: Characteristics of Chinese Teachers and Learners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Learner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Authoritarian; Benevolent dictator</td>
<td>Silent, deferent to authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Knowledge provider/disseminator</td>
<td>Passive recipients of knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge mastery</td>
<td>Build knowledge systematically</td>
<td>Attempt to master knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Possessors of deep knowledge</td>
<td>Question teachers outside classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>Able to answer all questions</td>
<td>Expect teachers to answer all questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examinations</td>
<td>Exam oriented</td>
<td>Exam achievers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Role of CHC Teachers**

The key to understanding the role of the teacher in the Chinese classroom is dependent on understanding the teacher/student relationship. The relationship between the teacher and student was identified by Confucius as being the third most important relationship after emperor-subject and parent-child (Lee, 1996). The teaching context is focused on knowledge delivery, dominated by external factors such as exams and textbooks. Therefore, teaching and learning is determined by content which is transmitted from teacher to student, indicating a one-way approach, termed as a “moulding orientation” (Gao & Watkins, 2002, p. 67). In this context, the teacher is viewed as an all-knowing entity in possession of knowledge and wisdom that is to be respected by learners (Chan, 1999). Figure 4.2 highlights the Chinese teaching and learning context and provides an insight into the external demands which have a significant influence on teacher and learner behaviours.

![Figure 4.2: A Model on the Moulding Orientation of Teaching (Gao & Watkins, 2002, p. 67)](image-url)
As Figure 4.2 indicates, classroom teaching and learning is one-way where the content proceeds from the teacher to the student through lecturing and drilling which eventually will lead to positive student outcomes in terms of exam achievement. In this context, students are passive acceptors of knowledge (Gao & Watkins, 2002). It is necessary to note that while the focus is on the textbook and content, Chinese teachers tend to include issues of daily life and methods of learning which go beyond the classroom. Both the textbook and teacher represent authoritative sources of knowledge (Cortazzi & Jin, 2001). The dotted line from exam achievement to examinations relates to feedback from examination results which in turn determine the examinations and the teaching-learning process. The high power-distance apparent in the Chinese classroom is reflected in Ginsberg’s observation (1992. p. 6):

In China, knowledge is not open to challenge and extension. The teacher decides which knowledge is to be taught, and the students accept and learn that knowledge. The lecturer is the authority, the repository of knowledge, leading the student forward into this knowledge, a respected elder transmitting to a subordinate junior.

The moulding orientation of teaching provides insights into the power distance between teachers and students in CHCs. It also shows the content focus of Chinese education and the position of teachers as knowledge owners.

Chinese teachers are held in high esteem and greatly respected. Often, the teacher is viewed as an authoritative parent who needs to be shown respect and obedience (Jin & Cortazzi, 1998; 2006; Gao, 2008; Chan & Rao, 2010). Chinese teacher beliefs or “conceptions of teaching” (Kember, 1997, p. 255) extend their role beyond the classroom. The Chinese teacher believes that they are responsible not only for cultivating the students’ cognitive knowledge but their moral values. They believe that they need to instil in their students positive attitudes to society and responsible moral behaviour (Ho, 2001; Kember & Watkins, 2010). Chinese society views the teacher as a good moral model and students expect to be morally guided (Jin & Cortazzi, 1995; 1998; 2006; Lee, 1996). Jin and Cortazzi’s (1998) seminal study on Chinese students’ perceptions of what constitutes a good teacher highlights not only student expectations but also the Chinese teacher’s conception of teaching. These authors concluded that a good teacher was one who had deep knowledge, was able to answer questions and provided a good moral model. Thus, the Chinese teacher is not only expected to be a
competent instructional model but also a good moral model in all areas of life (Gao & Watkins, 2001; Kember & Watkins, 2010).

The ‘paradox of the Chinese teacher’, where relationships differ considerably in and outside the classroom, is representative of the “complex nature of social roles and relationships in collectivistic cultures” (Ho, 2001, p 108). Despite being subjected to teaching practices and teacher-centred pedagogies that do not conform to Western standards, Chinese students perform well academically (Hau & Ho, 2010) and consider their teachers to be a “friend and parent” (Cortazzi & Jin, 2001, p. 117). One reason to explain this could be the style of teaching which develops interaction between the teacher and student regardless of the class size, leading to the building of an effective learning environment. The Chinese term for education, “jiao yu” embodies the dual role of the teacher in a Confucian based culture. “Jiao” means to teach and “yu” means to nurture (Zhang, 2002, p. 82). While considered sources of knowledge authority, teachers also have the obligation to “cultivate” the moral values of their students (Kember & Watkins, 2010, p. 177).

Research indicates that Chinese teachers build a close relationship with their students outside of their classrooms when informal discussions and collective activities occur. Biggs (1996, p. 274) observed that the teacher-student interactions outside of the formal classroom environment were “typically marked if not by warmth then by a sense of responsibility with mutual respect”. As the Chinese teacher views themselves as being responsible for both the cognitive and pastoral welfare of their students, they are very caring and nurturing and build relationships with their students and parents outside of the classroom environment (Ho, 2001; Cortazzi & Jin, 2001). Chinese teachers believe their authoritarianism is justified as it reflects care and concern for the student (Ho, 2001). The influence of Confucian values on Chinese society, particularly the teaching/learning context, is significant even though Confucianism as a philosophy has evolved and developed (Bond, 1991). Whether or not Chinese teachers realise it, they are influenced on some level by Confucian attitudes (Jin & Cortazzi, 1998).

Barker (1993) offers an explanation based on Hofstède’s power-distance theory which highlights the differences between classrooms in low and high power-distance societies. In large power-distance societies such as Singapore, Vietnam, China and Malaysia, the educational process is teacher-centred with the teacher as the authority figure, the
“guru”, who determines the intellectual path to be followed (Hofstede, 1994, p. 34). In this classroom environment, there is strict order maintained by teachers and students do not speak unless they are invited to do so by the teacher, indicating high power distance (Dimmock & Walker, 1998). In CHCs, the teacher’s role is didactic with a focus on teaching and setting of strict rules and clear directions for students to follow. In contrast, the educational process and classroom environment in low power-distance societies, like the UK and Australia, is more egalitarian with a focus on student-centred methodologies. In this environment, the student determines their intellectual path and is an active participant in the classroom. Students are expected to question the teacher as opposed to accepting everything that is provided for them. These differences are vital in enabling an understanding of the roots of cultural mismatches.

The literature identifies the teaching and learning environment in China as primarily teacher-centred, as the teacher is responsible for setting out the direction of the intellectual journey (Hofstede, 1994). The teaching and learning system is hierarchical with the teacher as the all-knowing entity. Chinese students appear to come from a high context culture where the emphasis is on building a group identity and ensuring continuity and stability (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Communication in high context cultures tends to be formal and distant. This is diametrically opposed to Western cultures which are low-context and therefore more egalitarian. Hofstede (1994) describes the educational process in Western Cultures as student-centered, where students determine their own intellectual paths and are rewarded with independence. However, Biggs and Watkins (2001) explain that categorisations about teaching, as indicated by Western research, are not relevant to the Chinese context. While the Chinese classroom appears to be essentially teacher-centered to the outsider, research has found that Chinese teachers craft their lessons in a sophisticated manner and employ a variety of strategies to promote student engagement and meaningful learning even though they teach in large classes (Cortazzi & Jin, 2001; Marton & Tsui, 2004). The teacher’s role as explained in this section sets the context for the next section which focuses on the role of the learner, a concomitant result of the teaching strategies adopted.

**Role of CHC Learners**

This section will discuss the key characteristics of learning behaviours typically associated with CHC learners. There have been numerous studies conducted on Chinese
Learners (CLs) (Biggs, 1996, 2003; Cheung, 2011; Jin & Cortazzi, 1998, 2002; Park, 2000; Chan & Rao, 2010; Saravanamuthu, 2008; Sit, 2013; Wang, Andre & Greenwood, 2015; Watkins & Biggs, 2001). Some of these studies identify CLs as modest, diligent students who value education and have great respect for authority (parents/teachers) (McInerney, 2008; Park, 2000; Watkins & Biggs, 2001). Research also associates CLs with negative stereotypes which include rote-learning, essentially memorisation and understanding, silent learning where the students are deferent and unquestioning of authority, and passive learning (Sit, 2013). The following sections discuss each of these stereotypes: rote-learning, memorisation and understanding, passive learning and silent (deferential to authority). The section concludes with a brief discussion of the paradox of the CL.

Rote-Learning

Chinese students are stereotypically viewed as “reproductive learners” (Yang, 2005, p. i) who adopt a surface approach to learning which includes memorisation of isolated facts for the purpose of passing exams (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Kember & Watkins, 2010). Samuelowicz’s (1987) Australian study on the learning problems of overseas students, based on feedback obtained from 145 academics and 136 postgraduate students, found that Asian ISs tend to adopt surface learning approaches more than their Australian counterparts. Genuine tutorial participation, where independent thought is not only encouraged but demanded, has been found to be challenging for such learners (Samuelowicz, 1987).

An increasing number of studies in the 1990s challenged the predominant stereotypes of Chinese learning styles, questioning the notion of memorisation which was increasingly seen as understanding rather than the less desirable rote-learning often associated with Chinese learners. Biggs 3P model (Biggs, 1996), introduced in Chapter Three, particularly the achieving category, is useful to explain the interpretation of achievement motivation among the Chinese (Sit, 2013; Yu, 1996). Achievement motivation, a result of socialisation in Confucian values, is based on collectivist values (Wang, Andre & Greenwood, 2015; Yu, 1996). Chinese students want to perform well in order to please their families and themselves, whereas Western students focus on individual goals. Chinese students view their success and failure in terms of their family obligations; thus feeling more pressure to succeed (Salili, 1996; Sit, 2013; Wang et. al., 2015). Chinese students attempt to fulfil their filial obligations through academic
achievements which are seen as an important way to repay their part and bring honour to their families (Hui, Sun, Chow & Chu, 2011). In some instances, local village communities add to the pressure to perform well on exams by providing gifts and other incentives for excellent performance in examinations (Hui et al., 2011). The individualist orientation of Western cultures leads to more individual goal orientations in contrast to the collectivist concerns of the Chinese culture. More recent studies point out the need for Chinese learners to be understood from a broad perspective involving interrelationships between different factors (Sit, 2013; Wang et. al., 2015).

Memorisation and Understanding

The notion of memorisation as a means of understanding has been researched extensively (e.g., Brown & Wang, 2016; Dahlin & Watkins, 2000; Kember & Danping, 2016; Marton, Dall’Alba, & Tse, 1996; Sit, 2013; Tran 2013; Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006; Watkins, 1996). Studies conducted in HK and mainland China indicate that memorisation is integrated with understanding and that they perform complementary functions, leading to higher cognitive outcomes (Dahlin & Watkins, 2000; Gow, Balla, Kember, & Hau, 1996; Marton, Watkins, & Tang, 1997; Marton, Wen & Wong, 2005). Contrary to research which stereotypes learners from CHCs as passive, memorisation is placed alongside understanding, reflecting and questioning in the Confucian tradition (Lee, 1996). Unlike most Westerners, Chinese believe that effort is far more important than ability which can be enhanced by effort. Thus, if they work hard enough, eventually they will reach their goals (Hau & Salili, 1996; Salili, 1996).

Understanding facilitates memorisation and is a precursor to deep understanding. Memorisation is not an end in itself but a strategy to achieve deeper understanding (Marton, Dall’Alba & Tse, 1996). Marton et al. (1996) argue that memorising and understanding are not mutually exclusive but intertwined. Their conclusions were based on data obtained from 17 interviews they conducted with 20 teacher-educators from Mainland China who were attending an EL course in Hong Kong. Two types of memorising were identified – mechanical memorisation and memorisation with understanding (Saravanamuthu, 2008). Therefore, the challenge is to identify pedagogical strategies which elicit memorisation with understanding rather than the mechanical alternative (Saravanamuthu, 2008). Scholars argue that in the Chinese classroom, the repetitive technique may have emerged from Confucian beliefs about
learning or from pressures placed on students due to exam emphasis (Biggs, 1996; Lee, 1996; Tang & Biggs, 1996).

Dahlin and Watkins (2000) conducted a qualitative comparative study on learning strategies of 18 German and 28 Chinese (HK) senior school students. Data was obtained through semi-structured in-depth interviews. The authors found that Chinese students had an affinity for repetition and memorisation and paid attention to the value of the content. On the other hand, the German students focused on the value of the activity itself and downplayed the role of repetition in the process of understanding. While German students used repetition for memory checks on their level of understanding, Chinese students believed that understanding was a long process which could only be achieved with extensive personal effort, requiring memorisation and understanding as concrete strategies to achieve understanding (Dahlin & Watkins, 2000).

Similarly, Kennedy (2002) explored the perceptions of teaching of adult Chinese learners of literature at a HK university (numbers not provided). The author found that the traditional stereotype of Chinese students as quiet, receptive and disinclined to challenge authority could be attributed to Chinese students’ beliefs in learning as a gradual process, requiring dedication and methodical steps. Typically, learning for a Chinese student comprises memorising information in order to initiate learning, understanding the new material, applying knowledge to real-life situations, and questioning and modifying original material (Kennedy, 2002). The first three stages occur in a solitary fashion while the final stage is verbally interactive (de Bary, 1998; Li, 2009; Pratt et. al., 1999). These aspects of the Chinese intellectual tradition highlight the deep reflective modes of learning adopted by Chinese students which challenge the traditional stereotypes of Chinese learners as rote learners who memorise facts in isolation purely for the purposes of regurgitation in exams. Fundamentally, the learning beliefs and purposes of any student influence their learning behaviours.

The inherent dynamism of learning enables CHC students to make conscious choices in deciding on appropriate learning approaches. These choices relate to the learner’s perceived locus of executive control. Locus of control refers to whether control of an outcome is perceived to be located within or outside a person (Watkins, 2000). The learner’s locus of executive control over strategies is affected by metacognition and metalearning (Biggs, 1987; Watkins, 2001). Metacognition refers to one’s awareness of
one’s cognitive resources relative to demands of the task at hand. A higher metacognition means that one has more confidence to plan, monitor and control how one responds to the task requirements (Biggs, 1987). Metalearning refers to the way learners form perceptions about institutional settings, become self-aware of their motives, and exercise control over strategy selection and deployment. Therefore, learning is more than reading and comprehension because it requires learners to possess self-knowledge about cognitive abilities, knowledge of academic task requirements, as well as appropriate ways of engaging with the tasks to achieve desired outcomes (Biggs, 1987).

The choice of learning approach is affected by awareness of learning strategies learners may deploy and perceived control over these strategies in particular learning environments. Therefore, a dynamic relationship exists between the student, the academic task at hand and the expected outcome. The dynamism of the relationship between the three components identified is operationalised in the interactive engagement of Biggs 3P model explained in Chapter Three. In the CHC teaching and learning context, the undue emphasis on exams has pushed learners towards performance goals. The surface-learning strategy appears to be less risky than adhering to a deep-achieving tendency (Salili, 1996). However, the repetitive learning strategy combines both surface and deep learning approaches in that it first involves understanding and then memorising prior to deep learning (Kember & Gow, 1990; Kember, 2000; Kember & Danping, 2016).

Some studies illustrate that CHC classrooms promote holistic student growth. Ho (2001) conducted a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of Chinese and Western teaching methods (in their respective cultural contexts). The study concluded that Chinese teaching and learning culture emphasises the holistic development of students by focusing on student values, morals and conduct both within and outside the classroom. Chinese teachers can then be characterised as learning facilitators in a paradoxically authoritarian yet student-centered classroom (Biggs & Watkins, 2001). These studies view the Chinese teaching-learning context in itself as a precursor to deep learning where the undue pressure on exams is countered by close teacher-student bonds. While Biggs and Watkins (2001) agree with Ho (2001) on Chinese pedagogy being holistic, they clearly state that Chinese examinations are norm-based. Thus, the teaching-learning context promotes both surface and deep learning. Studies which
challenge the negative stereotypes associated with rote-learning show that students from CHCs do not merely learn by rote. They first attempt to process the information, which implies a deeper level of understanding before actual memorisation takes place (Biggs, 1995; Kember & Gow, 1990).

Passive Learning

Chinese learners have been described as adopting passive approaches to learning (Lam, 2011; Sit, 2013). Research indicates that students from CHCs tend to avoid any kind of debate or questioning of the teacher and the materials presented in class (Barker, Child, Gallois, Jones & Callan, 1991; Samuelowicz, 1987; Zhao, 2007). The notion of face, outlined earlier, is associated with the conformist, passive learning style adopted by CLs from CHCs (Kennedy, 2002). As the teaching style is largely didactic and bound by texts, there is little opportunity for students to be active learners (Kennedy, 2002; Maley, 1990).

Research from the late 1990s challenged the idea of the passive CL (Jin & Cortazzi, 1995; 2001; Kennedy, 2002; Lam, 2011; Sit, 2013). Jin and Cortazzi (1996, p. 191) suggested that “students are not passive but reflective … Chinese students value thoughtful questions which they ask after sound reflection … less thoughtful questions may be laughed at by other students”. Kember (2000) challenged the stereotype of the passive learner as unadaptable and resistant to change through a comprehensive review of 90 action learning projects carried out in universities and colleges in HK by different scholars (for e.g. Biggs, 1996; Kember & Gow, 1990; Kember, 1996; Marton et. al., 1996). The projects included problem-based learning, peer teaching, simulations, reflective journals and group projects. The adaptability of the HK CHC students to innovative teaching methodologies led to the conclusion that CHC learners do not necessarily prefer passive learning and neither were they resistant to change. Littlewood, Liu and Yu’s (1996) and Spratt’s (1999) study showed that the students welcomed opportunities for active participation, which contrasts with the passive learning style believed to be adopted by most CHC learners. This finding was substantiated by Littlewood (1999) in China when he interviewed students who were fairly critical of their teachers for not raising enough points in their classroom discussions. Cheng (2000) argues that passive learning may be adopted by CLs as the teaching methods and students learning experiences are limited to a classroom climate which allows little opportunity for interaction.
Undeniably, there are commonalities between individuals who are from similar cultures. In the case of CHC students, it is important to note that a number of influences govern their learning behaviours. Such influences include psychological attributes, cultural values, and educational contexts/backgrounds. The interconnections between these needs to be studied in order to provide a thorough understanding of the approaches that CHC learners have to learning and their motivations. The studies cited in this section have pointed to the adaptability of the Chinese student and illustrated that the Confucian tradition does not necessarily lead to a passive approach to learning. CHC learners cannot be studied from merely a Chinese perspective and their behaviours explained as ‘Chineseness’ (Biggs, 1996). In addition, the learning purposes of CLs in the home country focus on knowledge demonstration rather than knowledge transformation (Turner & Hiraga, 1996). While there are some stereotypical characteristics associated with the CL, the studies cited in this section challenge these stereotypes. The studies cited indicate that CLs have a propensity to change, adapt and construct a new, alternate identity when confronted with different academic contexts and expectations. Studying CLs from this perspective will allow for a discursive construction of learner identity.

*Silent-Learning/Deferential to Authority*

As highlighted in the discussion on the role of the teacher in a CHC classroom, teachers are predominantly authoritative, especially in the formal environment of the classroom. The expectation is that students defer to the teacher’s authority, maintain silence and adopt an obedient stance (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Zhao 2007). Research on students from CHCs showed they were deferent, unquestioning of authority and therefore were reluctant to ask questions or contribute to discussions (Ping, 2010; Samuelowicz, 1987; Sit, 2013, Zhao, 2007). CLs maintain silence in the classroom due to the hierarchical conception of teaching and learning (Cortazzi & Jin, 2001) alluded to earlier and highlighted in Figure 4.2. One reason to explain the silent Chinese learner is the emphasis placed on order and harmony. To preserve this, Chinese students do not speak up unless invited to do so by the teacher.

Student quietness in the class can be a direct consequence of adherence to cultural traditions when interacting with others. Chalmers and Volet (1997) argue that CHC learners are quiet in class as they do not want to draw attention to themselves, waste the teacher’s time, and believe implicitly that their command of the English language is not
proficient enough to participate effectively in classroom discussions. CLs may choose to be quiet as they feel intimidated in the midst of local students (Volet & Kee, 1993). In addition, learners from non-Western cultures, particularly CHCs, sometimes feel that local students to do not value their opinions (Mullins, Quintrell, & Hancock, 1995; Yeung, 2015; Sit, 2013).

The idea of preserving one’s face is not uncommon among those from CHC cultures as briefly highlighted earlier. In Chinese culture, ‘face’ is a salient feature and associated with shame. The literal translation of the Chinese word “du lian” is “loss of face” where “lian” or “face” refers “to one’s dignity, self-respect, feeling of social concern and ability to fill social obligations in front of other people. The notion of face has a dual nature – it is determined not only by one’s conduct but determined and judged by other people” (Bedford, 2004, p. 36). In the context of the classroom situation, CHC learners attempt to preserve both the teacher’s face and their own. Questioning the teacher in the classroom is believed to be inappropriate as it may be embarrassing. Similarly, by asking questions, others may think that the questioner is ignorant, which may cause embarrassment (Bond, 1996; Chang & Holt, 1994; Tan, 2007).

To believe that the silent CL is not actively engaged with learning and thinking is a fallacy (Sit, 2013). The main purpose of learning is knowledge mastery and Chinese students firmly believe that they need to master fundamental knowledge before they are able to contribute or become creative (Pratt et al., 1999). Unlike Western students, Chinese students do not believe that speaking promotes learning (Sit, 2013). On the contrary, they believe that speaking hinders learning as it interferes with thinking. So when they are expected to engage with questioning and analysis at the beginning of their learning process by their Western teachers, they experience frustration and bewilderment (Kim, 2002; Pratt et al., 1999).

The idea that Confucianism teaches students to accept teachers’ authority and knowledge unquestioningly is questioned by Cheng (2000). Cheng argues that Confucius actually taught his students not to blindly follow their teachers as he said: “the teacher does not always have to be more knowledgeable than the pupil; and the pupil is not necessarily always less learned than the teacher” (2000, p. 440). CHC learners have been characterised as “tape-recorders” due to their unquestioning acceptance of knowledge didactically imparted by teachers (Biggs, 1996, p. 47).
However, some scholars believe this type of listening is actually active, concentrated listening which is the beginning of repetitive-to-deeper levels of learning (Cortazzi & Jin, 2001). Thus, the idea of a silent, compliant CHC learner may not necessarily be a result of adherence to Confucian values but a complex mix of societal and cultural expectations. Research needs to examine the complexities of CLs’ behaviours rather than attribute all learning strategies to Confucianism.

Paradox of the Chinese Learner
The discussion above has highlighted some contradictions in the conceptions of CLs. These contradictions have been acknowledged and reframed into the ‘Paradox of the Chinese learner’ (Biggs & Watkins, 2001; Kember & Danping, 2016). This paradox states:

> Despite large classes, external examinations, seemingly (to Westerners) cold classroom climates, and expository teaching, there are things going on in the fine-grain which are clearly adaptive: pre-dispositions to put in effort and seek meaning; to persist in the event of boredom or failure; and to foster the kind of interaction between teacher and student, and student and student, that engages higher rather than lower cognitive processes. Thus, gross characteristics, such as class size or even heavy external examinations, take on a different meaning in the CHC context to those in the Western context. (Watkins & Biggs, 2001, p. 3)

Essentially, the paradox emerged from categorisation of students from CHCs as rote learners with superficial understanding of content. Such learners, in the Biggs model, would perform poorly on examinations and assessments. However, empirical evidence shows that CLs perform well academically. There is greater awareness of the pedagogical implications of deep and surface learning which underpins the CL paradox (Saravanamuthu, 2008).

Marton et. al., (1993) provide insights into the learning behaviours of students through individual interviews. Six conceptions of learning were developed from interviews with Open University students in the UK: increasing one’s knowledge, memorising and reproducing, applying, understanding, seeing things in a different way, and changing as a person (Marton et al., 1993). Ideally, the progression from the first to sixth level of understanding would represent the movement from surface to higher levels of cognitive learning, but it is difficult to verify these constructs from interviews. These learning conceptions were seen hierarchically with the quantitative aspect of the first three levels of learning being contrasted to the qualitative perspective of the fourth, fifth and sixth levels (Watkins & Biggs, 2001). However, cultural variations imply that the learning
conception hierarchy does not apply in all contexts. For example, the concepts of memorisation and understanding are intertwined (Marton et al., 1996), which is an important step towards solving the paradox of the Chinese learner. To provide an additional insight into the learning conceptions, Watkins and Biggs (2001) identified traits of high cognitive learning from the teaching perspective. A summary of these are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Levels of Cognition in Learning from a Teaching Perspective (adapted from Watkins and Biggs, 2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptions of Teaching</th>
<th>Teacher-Centered</th>
<th>Centered on Process of Teaching</th>
<th>Student Centered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Content orientated in a didactic fashion. Merely transmits facts and skills, and students reproduce this knowledge.</td>
<td>Didactic transfer of information but teacher goes being mere transfer of information to alerting students to the context and structure in which information is posited.</td>
<td>Teacher is a facilitator of deep learning providing learning activities. Learning oriented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on</td>
<td>Role of teacher</td>
<td>Role of teacher</td>
<td>Role of learning outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels of cognitive learning</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Interim</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 may provide an insight into the high levels of cognitive learning that takes place in CHC classrooms despite the apparent didactic nature of teaching pedagogies. Ironically, in providing content information, the didactic teacher also facilitates deep learning. CHCs have been socialised from a young age to be docile and this docility is used in the CHC classroom to provide student-centered teaching. Therefore, the CL is dynamic and able to adopt learning styles appropriate to particular contexts.

Despite adopting learning behaviours believed to lead to poor learning outcomes, CLs outperform their Western counterparts in international Science and Mathematics tests (Kember & Danping, 2016). Adjustment issues were identified which raises the question of why and how Chinese students perform better, especially as the process of adjustment to a new cultural and academic environment causes them considerable stress and has a direct impact on their perceptions of teaching and learning.

Summary
The second section of this chapter provided information on the cultural identity of CHC learners. Stereotypes of CHC learners, primarily derived from deficit model studies, were described. Research which challenges these stereotypes and suggests CHC adaptability to changed environments, as well as their personal agency, was highlighted.
Based on the studies reviewed, a discursive construction of the CHC learner is recommended.

**Conceptual Framework for the Study**

Chapters Three and Four presented detailed information on the predominant theories that can inform studies on ISs’ experiences in navigating the demands of an unfamiliar academic and sociocultural environment. The current study attempts to distinguish itself from previous studies by adopting a nuanced, discursive approach to the ways in which ISs develop adjustment strategies. By focusing on two specific groups of ISs, APCs and CHCs, the current study provides detailed insights into how individual groups of ISs cope with the demands of a different academic and sociocultural environment. In order to achieve this, the current study adopts a conceptual framework which is primarily based on theories of agency which individuals enact in order to alter or modify existing behaviours. These theories are the most relevant as ISs are viewed as capable decision-makers who are in control of their behaviours and not ‘victims’ of an identity imposed by the host culture. As ISs are viewed as agentic individuals who make conscious, deliberate decisions, theories which focus on personal agency, are fundamental. Personal agency allows for individuals to actively position and reposition themselves. Thus, the current study is framed on personal agency and positioning theories. The theory of self is also significant as it enables the development of understandings of the different selves that individuals develop in positioning themselves. Finally, the ABC model which identifies affect, behavior and cognition behaviours is relevant to the current study.
Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted instrumental aspects of the ISs’ home cultural framework by providing insights into the history and politics of APCs and CHCs, which led to the construction of particular cultural identities. The dominant aspects of the wider political and sociocultural environment were explained. Characteristics of APC and CHC education with descriptions of the roles of teachers and learners were also provided. Identities are dynamic and malleable, adapting to different circumstances and expectations. An understanding of ISs’ original cultural identity will enable conclusions to be drawn on how students adapt to new cultures and the ‘transformation’ of their cultural identities, thus adopting a discursive approach to the construction of cultural identities. The culture construct is instrumental in understanding APC and CHC learners. The chapter concluded with a complete overview of the contextual and conceptual framework of the study as presented in Chapters Two, Three and Four. The next chapter, Chapter Five, provides an overview of the research methodology utilised in the current study.
CHAPTER FIVE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction
The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences and perceptions of ISs from APCs and CHCs when studying at an Australian tertiary institution, to obtain insights into the issues they face and strategies they develop in transitioning from home to host cultures. The overarching research question addressed by this study was:

How do ISs from APCs and CHCs adjust to the academic and sociocultural environment at an Australian university?

This was supported by the following guiding questions:

1. What issues are faced by ISs from APCs and CHCs when adjusting to an Australian academic environment? How do the issues identified impact on the ability of these students to cope with and meet Australian academic expectations and demands?
2. What strategies are developed by ISs from APCs and CHCs in adjusting to studying in an Australian university? What reasons are given for using these strategies?
3. What issues are faced by ISs from APCs and CHCs when adjusting to an Australian sociocultural environment?
4. What strategies are developed by ISs from APCs and CHCs in adjusting to the wider Australian social environment? What reasons are given for using these strategies?

This chapter describes the methodology underpinning the research, an overview of which is presented in Table 5.1. The chapter begins by describing the qualitative research approach, interpretive research paradigm and case study research design. The position of the researcher is then presented. Details on the selection of the site and participants are provided. Data collection and data analysis methods are described in detail. The quality criteria associated with the research is discussed in terms of trustworthiness. Finally, ethical considerations of the research are presented.
Table 5.1: Aspects and Approaches of the Study Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of the Methodology</th>
<th>Approach Taken in the Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research paradigm</td>
<td>Qualitative and Interpretive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research design</td>
<td>Collective case study/Intrinsic case study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher position</td>
<td>Insider at the research site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of participants</td>
<td>Purposeful sampling/Maximum variation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis/interpretation</td>
<td>Development of contextual matrices/Thematic coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constant comparative method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development of propositions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>Credibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transferability</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dependability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confirmability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Issues</td>
<td>Informed Consent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voluntary Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anonymity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confidentiality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualitative Research Approach

A qualitative research approach was used in the current study. Creswell defines qualitative research as:

an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (1998, p. 18)

One of the determining factors governing the choice of any research methodology is the aim or overarching research question. The aim of this study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of ISs in adjusting to the academic and sociocultural demands of the host environment. Thus, it is a process of inquiry, the goal of which was to understand the bigger issue of academic and sociocultural adjustments in a foreign setting. As the aim of the research was to explore the ISs’ experiences, the adoption of a qualitative approach, which focussed on describing these experiences by giving voice to ISs, was most appropriate. Consistent with qualitative research methodologies, a small sample was chosen to be studied in a single-site which contributed to depth of understanding and allowed detailed themes to emerge.
Interpretive Research Paradigm

This study is located within the interpretive research paradigm. The interpretive paradigm is concerned with the creation of meaning and is characterised by a concern for the individual and their view of reality (Crotty, 1998). This section begins by providing a brief description of the interpretivist research paradigm and then identifies the main characteristics of interpretivism, concluding with a justification of this approach for the current study.

The interpretive paradigm attempts to understand the “subjective world of human experience” (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 36). The interpretivist researcher focusses on action which may be thought of as “‘behaviour-with-meaning’; intentional behaviour and is future-oriented” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p. 23). The interpretive researcher begins with the participants and attempts to make sense of their interpretations of the world. The essence of the interpretivist approach is meaning-making, as social actions are dependent on the constitution of meaning (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Crotty, 1998). In order to understand the actions, the researcher has to interpret in particular ways what the actors are doing. This process of understanding is the achievement of ‘verstehen’ (Schwandt, 2000), a German term for ‘understanding’ used to refer to the study of social life. The assumption of verstehen is “that the meaning of human action is inherent in that action, and that the task of the inquirer is to unearth that meaning” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 160). Interpretivist researchers attempt to understand the primary process of social actions.

Research paradigms can be distinguished by two main philosophical dimensions relating to the nature and development of knowledge – ontology and epistemology. Ontology is the nature of reality (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988), while epistemology is defined as the relationship between the researcher and reality (Carson, Gilmore, Perry & Gronhaug, 2001) or how this reality is captured or known. A key characteristic of the interpretive paradigm is the belief that reality is multiple and relative (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). From an ontological position, interpretivism is socially constructed, subjective, susceptible to change and has multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2009). Epistemologically, interpretivism refers to subjective meanings and social phenomena. The focus of interpretivists is in the details of the situation, the reality behind these details, subjective meanings and motivating actions (Carson et al., 2000; Cohen et al., 2007). Within the interpretive paradigm, research is value-bound. The researcher is part
of what is being researched and cannot be separated from it; thus, their views will be subjective (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

As the purpose of research in the interpretive paradigm is to capture meanings in human interaction, the interpretivist researcher adopts personal and flexible research structures (Carson et al., 2001). Thus, naturalistic methods, such as interviews, are relied on for the meaningful construction of reality. During the process, the researcher is in constant collaboration and long-term engagement with the participants through dialogue (Angen, 2000). Inductive data analysis, where theory follows the research rather than precedes it, is an essential aspect of interpretivism (Creswell 2009).

Interpretivism is a useful approach to study human interactions which are naturally complex, as participants attribute different meanings, influenced by their individual and subjective perspectives (Checkland & Scholes, 1999). Researchers who use this approach emphasise the phenomena of human interactions in daily life. Thus, this approach is appropriate for the current study that explores the phenomena of human interactions in the international HE sector in the context of academic and sociocultural milieus. The use of an interpretivist framework enabled the uncovering of ISs’ understandings of the phenomenon of academic and sociocultural adjustments and allowed for interpretation of meanings in social contexts.

**Case Study Research Design**

A case study research design was adopted in the current study. Case studies provide a holistic means of describing and interpreting phenomena in context, from multiple perspectives (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994). According to Punch, the case study “aims to understand the case in depth, and its natural setting, recognising its complexity and its context” (2005, p. 144). Case study research is holistic, with the intention of understanding the wholeness and unity of the case.

Case studies are characterised as being particularistic, descriptive and heuristic (Merriam, 2009). Particularistic refers to the specificity of focus which can be a situation, event, program or phenomenon. The case is important for what it reveals about the phenomenon and for what it might represent. Case studies “concentrate attention on the way particular groups of people confront specific problems, taking a holistic view of the situation” (Shaw, 1978 cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 37). Descriptive
refers to the ‘thickness’ of description which is the end-product of a case study. Thick description is the complete, literal description of the incident or entity being considered. Case studies examine a range of influences and portray their interaction, often over a period of time (Yin, 2014). The heuristic aspect of case studies refers to the illumination of the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under study. These can bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader’s experience or confirm what is known. Previously unknown relationships are expected to emerge leading to a rethinking of the phenomenon being studied (Yin, 2014).

In case studies, the case is a ‘bounded system’ (Yin, 2012). However, Yin (2012) notes that the boundaries between the case and the context are not always evident. The onus is on the researcher to identify and describe the boundaries of the case as clearly as possible. Case studies are holistic and there is an explicit attempt to preserve the wholeness, unity and integrity of the case. Further, multiple sources of data are used to describe the case, generating rich, thick descriptions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Yin (2009) advises that case studies are appropriate in answering ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions, when the behaviour of those involved in the study cannot be manipulated, where the purpose is to cover relevant contextual conditions of the phenomenon and when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are unclear. Therefore, the case study design is appropriate for this research given that the focus is on obtaining deep insight into how ISs act and react in a new culture. In particular, the case study design enables the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding while at the same time preserving the unique, natural setting of the study.

For the current study, the case was defined as the experiences and perspectives of two groups of ISs (from APCs and CHCs) when studying at a particular Australian tertiary institution. The case study characteristics of particularistic, descriptive and heuristic are outlined below. The case study is particularistic as it explored the experiences and perspectives of ISs from APCs and CHCs when studying at an Australian tertiary institution in order to obtain insights into the issues they face and strategies they develop in transitioning from home to host cultures. The case study is descriptive as it provides thick, rich descriptions of the phenomenon under study through the perceptions and experiences of the ISs. Finally, the case study is heuristic as it
illuminates the understanding of the phenomenon under study, providing new insights and understandings into how ISs adjust to the environment of the host culture.

Within the current study an intrinsic and collective case study design was used. According to Stake (1994), an intrinsic case study is undertaken because the researcher wants a better understanding of a particular case. In this study, the aim was to understand ISs’ adjustments in one particular host environment. A collective case study was also utilised as two cultural groups of ISs were the participants. This allowed similarities and differences between the two cultural groups to be identified.

**Researcher Position**

The researcher position in a qualitative study is of utmost importance as attempts must be made to ensure objectivity and protect the integrity of the research. This section begins by explaining the importance of maintaining objectivity in qualitative research and then describes the strategies adopted by the researcher in the current study to maintain objectivity. The researcher’s position at the research site and implications for this research are also discussed.

Typical of qualitative interpretivist studies, the aim of the researcher is to make meaning of the context and provide explanations for the emerging phenomena. In this process, the researcher needs to protect against any preconceived ideas to ensure limited subjectivity (Tufford & Newman, 2010). While true objectivity is rarely easy to attain, an interpretivist researcher must attempt as much as possible to remove themselves from the interpretation by “mitigate[ing] the potential deleterious effects of unacknowledged preconceptions related to the research” (Tufford & Newman, 2010, p. 81). Thus, the interpretivist researcher must recognise and acknowledge potential for subjectivity and actively develop strategies to maintain an objective stance.

In the current study, the researcher’s insider status as an academic employed at the research site was advantageous. The researcher’s physical proximity to the participants provided mutual ease of accessibility. The researcher was also familiar with the culture of the university and was able to locate physical spaces which were convenient and conducive for interviewing participants.
The researcher had been the course coordinator of the Academic Preparatory Program (APP) in the English Language Centre at the research site. While four of the participants had completed the APP during the researcher’s term of coordination, all data collection was conducted during the researcher’s employment in a different capacity. The previous role of the researcher as course coordinator enabled the establishment of familiar, comfortable relationships with participants, which helped to establish good rapport between the researcher and participants.

In the context of the current study, the researcher made at least two concerted attempts to mitigate subjectivity. The researcher recognised that objectivity might be compromised based on her personal context. First, as a migrant to Australia, the researcher had experienced severe culture shock in the first few years. Together with her long association with ISs, the researcher was very empathetic to the issues faced by this cohort of students. However, being aware of these possible biases, the researcher made every attempt to remove herself out of the migrant/ISs’ context and reminded herself to recognise that each individual’s experience is unique. While still maintaining an empathetic attitude, the researcher focused on the participants and encouraged them to reflect on the different aspects of their experiences from various perspectives. Second, as mentioned in Chapter One (Position of the Researcher), some participants were known to the researcher as the researcher had been the course coordinator of the APP these participants had completed prior to their mainstream studies. The researcher ensured that she focused on the research aspect of her role by adopting a non-judgemental stance during the interviews and throughout the data analysis process. The researcher constantly reminded herself to accurately reflect the narratives of the participants’ experiences and privilege their voices as reflected in the reporting of the findings which include the authentic voice of the participants.

**Site and Participants**

The research site was selected by purposeful convenience sampling. Patton and Patton (2002) explain the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study. The study was conducted at a large Australian public university that has a reputation for attracting ISs who comprise more than 30% of the student cohort. The main source countries of ISs at the research site include China and KSA. The university had increased IS enrolments in recent years, and issues which assist or impede IS’s success had been discussed in a number of forums. Thus, the site
was purposefully chosen due to the ability to access a range of ISs. The site is also where the researcher is currently employed, providing a convenient location and insider access. The role of the researcher and its impact on the research was addressed earlier in this chapter.

A few considerations led to the choice of a single-site for the study. First, fewer samples studied in depth tend to generate more useful data in a qualitative study, as opposed to larger samples which can only be studied superficially. Second, pragmatic factors of financial and time constraints were taken into consideration. With a single-site, less travel was required, reducing both the time and financial resources required. Finally, ease of access to both equipment and participants was also considered. In addition, the containment of the study to a single-site meant greater accessibility to participants.

There were 17 participants in this study selected by purposeful and maximum variation sampling. Maximum variation sampling is used when the aim is to describe individuals that differ on some characteristic or trait (Creswell, 2005). This sampling strategy was adopted, as the purpose of the study was to describe the academic and sociocultural adjustments of two international ethnic groups: those from APCs and CHCs. The rationale for the choice of these participants was to study specific groups of ISs. APCs were chosen as there is a paucity of Australian research on this cohort of students who are relative newcomers to Australian HE. In contrast, students from CHCs have been a significant part of Australian HE over an extended period of time. Both cohorts were dominant groups of ISs at the research site. The use of maximum variation sampling also helped to overcome the criticism that many studies on ISs tend to treat all groups of ISs as one homogeneous group.

The criteria for participant selection were that they had to be international HE students of APC and CHC descent who were willing to share their experiences with the researcher and were in their first year of an undergraduate or postgraduate degree. Participants were recruited through the English Language Centre at the research site. Information sheets relating to the research were provided to lecturers at the English Language Centre. These were then distributed among ISs. Potential participants were invited to contact the researcher, through email or text messages, indicating their interest in participating in the research. Further information on Ethics is provided in a later section in this chapter.
Table 5.2 provides a detailed summary of the 17 participants, outlining their country, gender, marital status, age, course studies, Semester Weighted Average (SWA)/Course Weighted Average (CWA) results and whether they had participated in an APP. Nine participants were from APCs, with three being from KSA, three from Iraq and three from Iran. The remaining eight participants were from CHCs. Ten of the participants were female, with the remaining seven being male. There were four males and females each in the APC cohort, while the CHC group comprised of two males and six females. Six of the APC participants were married while three were single. APC participants’ ages ranged from 25-42 years with three participants in their 20s, four in their 30s and two in their forties. In contrast, all eight CHC participants were single people in their 20s.

Participants were enrolled in a diverse range of study programs. Eight APC participants were enrolled in a postgraduate program while one was enrolled in an undergraduate business course. Of the eight APC postgraduate students, five were studying postgraduate health science courses while the remaining three were enrolled in a Humanities PhD program. Amongst the eight CHC participants, one was enrolled in a PhD in Business, three were undergraduate students (two Humanities and one health sciences) and the remaining four were enrolled in a postgraduate course (one Business and three Health Sciences). The Semester Weighted Average (SWA) of the participants in their first semester of mainstream studies ranged from 60% (lowest) to 78% (highest). Based on the university grading system, 11 of the 13 participants on undergraduate and postgraduate (coursework) programs obtained credits while two scored distinctions. The final CWA results on completion of studies indicate that six participants obtained credits across their course while the remaining seven participants scored distinctions. The four PhD participants were on track with their thesis submission at the time of writing this thesis. Thirteen of the participants attended the APP which was a one semester preparatory course to develop students’ academic literacy and EL skills, before moving onto their mainstream studies. The other four participants obtained direct entry to the university through IELTS.
### Table 5: Summary of the Participants' Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YS/NO</th>
<th>Year/Program</th>
<th>Academic Level</th>
<th>Weighted Average</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Weighted Average</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Weighted Average</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Weighted Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>P/G Coursework (Health Science)</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>Final Results - 65%</td>
<td>KSA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>P/G Coursework (Health Science)</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>KSA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>P/G Coursework (Health Science)</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>U/G Bachelor of Education</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>Final Results - 65%</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>U/G Bachelor of Education</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>U/G Bachelor of Education</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>PhD (Business School)</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>Final Results - 71%</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>China</td>
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<tr>
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<td>PhD (Archeology)</td>
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<td>Single</td>
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<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>PhD (Library Science)</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend:
- Y: Yes
- N: No
Data Collection Methods

Three major forms of qualitative data collection were used in this research: semi-structured interviews, field notes and documents. Data were collected in Semester 1, 2011 and Semester 2, 2012.

Semi-structured Interviews

Interviews were conducted both face-to-face and through the use of emails. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with ISs to obtain in-depth information and insights on students’ learning experiences at an Australian university, and the influence of these on their academic and sociocultural adjustments. Interviews are a “face-to-face encounter between the researcher and participants’ perspective on their lives, experiences or situations as expressed in their own words” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 76). Semi-structured interviews are open-ended and unstructured, having flexibility for the interviewer to change direction and focus through a list of pre-planned guiding questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Interviews enable the researcher to direct the line of questioning to which answers are open-ended (Creswell, 2003). These types of interviews allow for further clarification of the main issues of the study (Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte, 1999).

Interviews are often used in qualitative research for their inherent strengths. As the interview is a managed verbal exchange (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003), the interviewer attempts to build rapport with the respondent and the interview progresses like a conversation. Some of the strengths of this method are that it builds positive rapport between the interviewer and interviewee and is an efficient, practical method of gathering data about phenomena that cannot be easily observed (Opdenaker, 2006). Interviews can also have high levels of legitimacy as respondents can describe their feelings and experiences in detail. Meanings behind actions can also be revealed as the interviewee is able to articulate their thoughts and ideas with little direction or interference from the interviewer. Interviews allow immediate and prompt discussion of complex issues and questions as the interviewer can probe areas suggested by participants’ responses (Creswell, 2009). A final strength of interviews is that they are easily recorded.

The use of interviews can have some limitations. A key limitation is that the effectiveness of interviews is heavily dependent on the communication skills of the
interviewer who must have the skill and ability to respond to the interviewee. These include the ability to clearly structure questions; listen attentively; pause, probe or prompt appropriately and encourage the interviewee to talk freely; as well as the ability to think of questions during the interview (Clough & Nutbrown, 2007; Cohen Manion & Morrison, 2007). It is possible that the interviewer might unconsciously give out signals or cues which guide the respondent to provide answers expected by the interviewer rather than the respondent’s actual perceptions. Interviews can also be time consuming and expensive. As interviews generate a large corpus of data, the depth of information can be difficult to analyse, making it challenging to assess what is relevant (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

Two rounds of semi-structured interviews were conducted in the current study. Each interview ranged from 45-90 minutes and was audio-recorded on a tablet with participants’ permission. Interviews were conducted at a time and place convenient to the participant. This ranged from the researcher’s office to the university café. While the interviews were being recorded, field notes were also taken. The tablet recording was beneficial in transferring and storing data electronically and provided ease of reference in the transcribing process.

The first round of interviews was in the participants’ first semester of studies (Semester 1, 2011) and the second round of interviews was conducted a year later (Semester 2, 2012). This enabled the participants to provide different perspectives of their experiences.

The purpose of the first interview was to obtain participant’s perspectives on their initial learning experiences at an Australian university. The semi-structured interviews consisted of eight guiding questions as listed below:

1. What reasons led to you to pursue an overseas degree program? What led you to choose Australia as your study destination? Why did you choose this [University]?
2. How did you obtain entry into the university? Was it through IELTS or an entry pathway? If you were on an entry pathway, was it useful for your entry into mainstream?
3. What were your initial impressions of [city] and of [University]? How did you feel when you first arrived in Australia? Highlight some of your positive and negative experiences e.g. loneliness or homesickness or delight at being in a new culture and making friends. How do you feel now?
4. Have you joined any club or student organisation on campus? Do you think that students are well informed about campus or social activities and events?
Have you taken part in any of these activities, and if so, in what way do you feel they have contributed to your personal development?

5. Did you feel confident to participate in classroom activities when you commenced your study in Australia? What do you think of your English proficiency at that time? Do you think you have made improvements in communicating in English? What strategies have you adopted?

6. What do you think of the role of a teacher? How do you feel about the teaching method adopted by the mainstream Australian academics? What, if any, do you feel are the main differences between the teaching methods used in your country and those used in Australia?

7. Are you willing to participate in group discussions (both in class and in group projects)? How and what have you contributed to these discussions? How did you feel about your contributions? Do you prefer to work alone or in groups? Why?

8. Have you experienced difficulties in your studies? How did you address these difficulties? Have you been able to make use of the learning resources provided?

While these eight guiding questions were always asked, participants were provided with opportunities to speak at length on other experiences and issues that they identified as significant to their experiences.

The second interviews were an opportunity for participants to reflect on their experiences after 12 months had elapsed. The purpose of the second interview was to allow the participants to provide additional perspectives and experiences, and to further explore issues identified in the first interview. The second interview consisted of 10 guiding questions.

1. How do you feel about university life right now? Is there anything in particular you would like to describe?

2. Having experienced life in Australia for a few semesters now, can you reflect on your best and worst experiences? What made these experiences good or bad?

3. How do you feel about the academic demands on your studies? What do you find to be most and least helpful? Examples can include peer discussions, relationships with academic staff, or family support.

4. What sort of assistance would you like from the university?

5. When we first spoke, you highlighted some differences between the teaching and learning environment of your country and Australia. How do you feel about this now? Do you feel that you have adjusted? What changes did you make in your behaviour to adjust to the classroom environment in Australia?

6. Describe your social network. Have you been able to extend your network of friends? Where are your friends from? Do you have many local Australian friends? Why or why not?

7. What are your main goals? Have you been successful in achieving your goals?

8. What is your main motivation? What are the consequences to you personally of not achieving your goals?
9. Do you still feel there many differences between your country and Australia? What sort of differences exist?
10. Do you feel adjusted socially and academically in Australia? Did you have to make any changes to your attitudes and behaviours? Do you think you have changed permanently? Please explain why and the changes you made. If you did not make any changes, explain why you did not do so.

As Guba and Lincoln (1994) recommend, participants were given opportunities to member check their transcripts. Participants were emailed a copy of their transcript to check. However, none of the participants modified their transcripts. Member checking establishes validity and provides an opportunity for participants to correct any misinterpretations of what they said in the interview.

Email Correspondence

The current study made use of emails as a tool to enhance the face-to-face interviews in two ways. An initial email was sent to participants to establish contact and confirm dates and times of meetings, provide the Information Sheet and Consent Form (see Ethics section for detail), and obtain participant demographic information. This demographic information included country of origin, sex, age, and current course of study.

Email communication was also used to provide a means of clarifying ideas which occurred as the interviews were being transcribed. Below are two extracts from emails returned by participants in response to clarification on comments provided during their interviews.

Extract of email conversation with Serena (August 2011)

Question: You expressed some views regarding assessments in China and Australia. Can you provide an expansion of the view you offered as I would like to explore your views further?

Answer: Assessment for the students in Australia is more fair compared with the Chinese assessment. Australian assessment assess the students from different angles. communication, people skill, academic skill, practical skills. However, Chinese assessments not fully assess students any single skill. Chinese students may know the knowledge, but it is hard to tell from the assessment whether they fully understand why or principle behind the knowledge. It is impossible to tell whether they are able to apply what they learn from the university to their future career.
Extract of email conversation with Jaffar (March 2012)

Question: What differences are there between the classroom culture in Saudi Arabia and Australia? You mentioned a few during the interview but which are the main differences in your opinion?

Answer: The differences in classroom cultures are a result of both education systems differences. In Saudi Arabia, there are no teamwork task force or assignments in the unit outline. There are a lecturer phobia among Saudi Arabia student were the is [sic] the student will try not give a full answer to his classmate. from the student classroom are [sic] differ because of the teaching system is differ too. No visual aids, electronic journal and books databases. Student who finds an answer will be conservative to release to his classmate.

The email communication established with the participants provided more detailed information that was not obtained in the interviews, thus enabling deeper levels of understanding.

Field Notes
Field notes were used in the study to complement the interview recordings and transcripts. Field notes are created by researchers when observing a culture, setting or social situation to remember and record the behaviours, activities, events and other features of the setting being observed (Schwandt, 2015). Descriptive and reflective field notes can assist researchers. The descriptive aspect of field notes focuses on factual data, while the reflective aspect records researcher’s thoughts, ideas and questions (Hamo, Blum-Kulha & Hacohen, 2004).

Field notes have significant advantages and limitations. They are simple, quick and inexpensive (Kieren & Munro, 1985; Tessier, 2012). As field notes are detailed and prepared after each field event, they allow the researcher to recall information and details in the latter stages of analysis. One of the key advantages of field notes is the opportunity for immediate and constant analysis (Tessier, 2012). As the notes are being prepared, the researcher can engage with preliminary analysis. Such preliminary analysis can assist the researcher in becoming self-reflective and start to develop understanding and meaning-making. However, the task of writing field notes can be time consuming and detract the researcher’s attention from the actual event. In the case of an interview, the researcher needs to pay direct and complete attention to the respondent and being engaged with jottings can affect the rapport building process between researcher and respondent. Field notes can also be highly subjective as they are based on the researcher’s personal beliefs (Tessier, 2012). Field notes cannot be
comprehensive as the speed of writing is much slower than speech which poses
difficulty for the researcher to write everything down during the field event (Beebe &
Takahashi, 1989). A significant limitation of field notes is that they cannot be
reproduced (Ashmore & Reed, 2000).

In the context of the current study, field notes recorded thoughts and observations which
occurred to the researcher during and immediately after the interviews. These were used
for two purposes: an initial narrative was constructed of individual participants using
the notes, and the notes were instrumental in informing the second interview. Notes, in
conjunction with the transcripts, provided complementary sources for data analysis.

**Documentary Evidence**
The current study utilised documents which comprised a small suite of secondary data
sources. Documents, as research tools, are both beneficial and limiting. The main
advantage is that the use of documents requires data selection rather than data
collection, making it focussed and efficient. Ease of accessibility, particularly
availability of documents in the public domain due to the Internet, is a key advantage
(Merriam, 1998). Since the data has already been gathered for other purposes, use of
documents tends to be more cost-effective. Documents are stable, exact and provide
broad coverage (Yin, 1994; Merriam, 1998). A key limitation of the use of documents is
that they may contain insufficient detail as they are independent of a research agenda
and produced for a range of other purposes. As data from documents is deliberately
selected, there may be “biased selectivity” (Yin, 1994, p. 20) in their use. Documents
may also represent an incomplete collection.

In the current study documentary sources obtained though the university database (with
suitable permission – see Ethics section) were participant’s results as SWA and CWA,
and EL proficiency (as IELTS). The participants’ SWA in their first semester of
mainstream studies and the final CWA on completion of studies across their course
were obtained. As the current study is an interpretivist study, only average marks of
participants were obtained to compare with the perceptions the participants provided.
The IELTS entry scores of participants were obtained to provide contextual information
on participants’ EL proficiencies. This information was only relevant when participants
had obtained direct entry into the university.
Stages of Data Analysis

Overview
This section begins by providing general information on data analysis in interpretive research and then explains the data analysis stages adopted in the current study. The data were analysed in stages, as suggested by Miles and Huberman’s (1994) framework, shown in Figure 5.1. This framework consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions and verifications. The stages identified in Figure 5.1 indicate the concurrent, interactive nature of qualitative data analysis.

![Figure 5.1: Components of Data Analysis: Interactive Model (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 12)](image)

The first stage, data reduction, occurred throughout the analysis. It is the process during which the mass of qualitative data gathered, such as interviews and field notes, are reduced and organised (Punch, 2005). This reduction occurs through coding and writing of summaries and through the sifting of data to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant data (Punch, 2005).

The second stage in the process of data coding is complex and occurs in phases. First, the data is carefully read and statements relevant to the research questions identified and assigned a code or category. Define “codes [as] tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes are attached to ‘chunks’ of varying size – words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs” (1994, p. 56) to organise the raw data into conceptual categories. This process, also known as ‘open coding’, organises the data into manageable chunks (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Analysis then takes place and patterns within the codes are identified (Punch, 2005). Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest a good display of coded data in the second stage so that initial conclusions can be drawn from the data obtained. During this
process, the data units are clustered into common themes and grouped together into first-order themes, second-order themes and others as required. It is important to recognise that the second stage is a continual process rather than one carried out at the end of data collection. Based on the display of coded data, conclusions on a particular piece of research can be developed and verified through reference to existing literature, field notes and further data collection.

Punch (2005) explains that the first two stages are precursors to the third stage of analysis during which conclusions are drawn. Drawing conclusions is also a process which occurs concurrently with the reduction and display of data (Punch, 2005). The concurrent and iterative aspect of the Miles and Huberman (1994) data analysis framework is appropriate to the current study which focused on exploring and unpacking the different influences of ISs’ adjustments to the host academic and sociocultural environment. This framework was also appropriate due to the large volumes of data; thus, the coding and categorising aspects were particularly useful in deriving themes which eventually led to the development of propositions.

In the current study, three stages of data analysis (data reduction, data display, drawing conclusions) each involving two levels were used. These are presented in Figure 5.2, which shows the connection between the six levels within the three stages of analysis from the Miles and Huberman framework. For the purposes of this study, the framework has been named Six Stages of Data Analysis.
The bottom two levels of Figure 5.2, transcript analysis and development of matrices, correspond to data reduction. Individual participant narratives were constructed and matrices developed for each ethnic group of participants (APCs and CHCs). The middle two levels of Figure 5.2 correspond to the second stage of analysis, data display. Individual matrices for each ethnic group were collated and specific categories developed which led to the identification of two main themes and sub-themes. The top two levels of Figure 5.2 correspond to drawing conclusions. This involved the development of four propositions and eight sub-propositions which emerged from the earlier levels of data analysis, finally culminating in the creation of a tentative model to explain ISs’ academic and sociocultural adjustments. The two-directional arrows on either side of Figure 5.2 highlight that the researcher moved continuously between the levels as data analysis was a continuous, interactive and concurrent process. Each of these stages/levels is described in detail.

Data Reduction
The first stage of data reduction took place in two levels as illustrated in Figure 5.2. The two levels of analysis were the construction of individual transcripts and the creation of matrices.
Individual participant narratives

In the first level of analysis, interviews were transcribed and individual participant narratives were created based on transcripts and field notes. A preliminary analysis was conducted after each interview, which informed the approach and questions used in subsequent interviews. The researcher transcribed all 17 recordings manually on a computer. As the current study was on ISs’ experiences while studying at an Australian institution, the focus was on meanings shared by the participants during the interviews. The process involved constant listening to the recordings which enabled the researcher to develop familiarity with the content and meanings articulated by respondents. Each interview took between 8-10 hours to transcribe. As the researcher was transcribing, ideas, which emerged were noted in a separate notebook; thus transcribing was the first step of analysis. After each transcript was completed, the researcher made detailed notes for purposes of participant cross comparison. See Appendix 1 for an example of a summary of one participant’s interview and preliminary analysis.

Constant use of the transcripts, together with listening to the recordings, enabled the researcher to conduct further analyses. Detailed analysis of the transcripts took place through an open coding process, informed by the narratives developed on individual participants in the data reduction stage. This is the process of organising the material into ‘chunks’ before bringing meaning to those chunks (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The coding process was viewed as a continuous process of analysis. Twelve items to describe participants’ responses were identified in this process: academic results, reasons for coming to Australia, entry pathway, initial difficulties, current difficulties, perception of strategies, perception of teacher’s role, collaborative learning (in-class group discussions, group projects), cultural issues, EL proficiency and learning goals.

Development of Matrices of Ethnic Groups

The second phase of data reduction involved grouping the individual interviews based on the questions used in the semi-structured interviews. A matrix for each ethnic group was developed, based on the 12 items identified in the first level of analysis. The matrices were compiled to discover commonalities and differences between participants of each ethnic group. During this phase, participants from APCs and CHCs were analysed separately as the researcher wanted to create a profile for each group prior to
making any cross-cultural comparisons. Each matrix consisted of extracts from participant transcripts. The coding and analysis was enhanced by the matrices which provided visual displays of analysis (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). This approach was useful as it enabled the researcher to identify areas where a particular participant did not identify with an item of analysis (empty cells). The matrices for the APC and the CHC participants are presented in Appendices 2A and 2B, respectively.

**Data Display**
Data display occurred at two levels of analysis – collation of individual ethnic group matrices into one and the development of themes and interconnections.

**Collation of Matrices**
Initially, the matrices constructed for each ethnic group were collated in order to develop specific categories for cross-cultural comparisons. To maintain consistency and make cross-cultural comparisons, the same 12 items used in the data reduction stage were used for the collation and collapsing of data from both ethnic groups. This allowed for the emergence of categories. A category is an abstract conceptual label which attempts to provide a summary description of the key features in passages (Creswell, 2009). The items relating to academic results and reasons for coming to Australia were essentially additional demographic data that did not answer the research questions and were removed. Some items were grouped while others were expanded to more accurately reflect what the participants had said in their interviews. For example, initial and current difficulties were too broad and some elements were shifted into other categories. Through a process of reading, reflection and detailed study of the transcripts, the 12 items were collapsed to create eight categories: teaching and learning, collaborative learning, independent learning, SRL/Learning goals, culture, religion, parental responsibilities/financial obligations, and entry pathways (APP).

**Development of Themes and Interconnections**
The eight categories were refined in the second level analysis of data display and interconnections between them established. During this phase, the researcher consulted the matrices constantly to ensure all major categories were clearly identified. The eight categories were colour coded. Individual transcripts were re-interrogated and quotes colour coded to match the eight categories identified. An example of a colour coded transcript is shown in Appendix 3.
The eight categories were refined and three main themes were identified (home culture academic environment, host culture academic environment, and sociocultural environment) along with 14 sub-themes (see Table 5.3). This occurred through a process of selective coding which was used to identify core themes. The researcher studied each of the eight categories, highlighting interconnections and placing each category into a higher order category which encompassed key themes. Once the main themes and sub-themes were identified, interconnections and influences between these were analysed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Academic environment</th>
<th>Academic environment</th>
<th>Sociocultural environment</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Subthemes</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Home culture</td>
<td>High power distance – formal, distant, authoritative</td>
<td>Low power distance – egalitarian, knowledge-facilitation/discovery</td>
<td>Lack of hospitality – perceived and/or real racism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Characteristics of learners – dependent, unquestioning, passive learners, knowledge recipients – ‘empty vessel’ theory</td>
<td>Characteristics of learners – active, involved</td>
<td>Lack of cultural competence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paradox of the teacher</td>
<td>Role of APPs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SRL behaviours – intrinsic and extrinsic motivation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some resistance – EL proficiency, collaborative learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creation of ‘transient’ identity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Led to</td>
<td>Proposition 1</td>
<td>Propositions 2 and 3</td>
<td>Proposition 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the focus in the analysis was on the academic environment of both cultures, the two themes of home and host academic environment were collapsed into one. This resulted in two major themes, academic environment and sociocultural environment, which are
used throughout the thesis.

**Drawing Conclusions**
The third stage of data analysis, drawing conclusions, involved two levels: development of propositions and sub-propositions, and the development of a theoretical model.

**Development of Propositions and Sub-Propositions**
Four main propositions and eight sub-propositions were then developed to explain how ISs from APCs and CHCs adjust to the Australian host culture. These are presented in Table 5.4. These were refined as the researcher proceeded with the writing up. During this level of analysis, the researcher constantly moved between annotating, reflection and transcript study. The propositions and sub-propositions are presented and discussed in the three findings chapters (Chapters Six, Seven and Eight).

**Development of a Theoretical Model**
In the final level of analysis, a model was constructed to describe ISs’ academic and sociocultural adjustment. The model was developed based on the four propositions and eight sub-propositions reflecting the key themes and categories which had emerged from the findings. This model is presented and discussed in Chapter Nine.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Proposition 1:</th>
<th>Proposition 2:</th>
<th>Proposition 3:</th>
<th>Proposition 4:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Environment</td>
<td>ISs have incongruous or disparate expectations and experiences in the academic environments of the home and host cultures. This is due to their perceptions of fundamental differences between the home and host academic environments.</td>
<td>The incongruity between ISs’ expectations of the roles of teachers and learners initially creates confusion and displacement in the Australian academic environment.</td>
<td>Despite encountering challenges with some learning experiences, ISs with a strong sense of identity are able to develop independent learning behaviours as these are not static or culturally bound.</td>
<td>While ISs exhibit a degree of successful adaptation to the academic environment of the host environment, broader sociocultural adjustment is limited with ISs developing a range of different strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propositions Described in Chapter Six</td>
<td>1.1 The value systems and wider political and sociocultural context of home countries of ISs from APCs and CHCs are characterised by high power distance and strong collectivist orientations. Thus, ISs have expectations that teachers in all classroom contexts hold an authoritative role as knowledge givers and moral guides.</td>
<td>1.2 ISs perceive the academic environment of the host culture to be egalitarian.</td>
<td>2.1 Due to differences in academic environments, ISs face challenges in adjusting to the host academic culture, which emphasises active rather than passive learning.</td>
<td>4.1 ISs social adaptation is inhibited due to issues of EL proficiency, lack of sociocultural competence and limited opportunities for social interaction due to ISs’ age, cultural background and family context in addition to actual and perceived racism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propositions Described in Chapter Seven</td>
<td>2.2 ISs experience difficulties due to a lack of understanding of Australian academic and sociocultural norms, including expectations of academic staff in the host culture, aggravated by a lack of EL proficiency.</td>
<td>3.1 Internal and external pressures and stressors (e.g. financial pressures, demands of government sponsorships, family honour and pride) make it necessary for ISs to develop appropriate learning behaviours.</td>
<td>3.2 ISs develop a range of coping strategies due to internalised extrinsic motivation (acceptance of personal responsibility) and motivation (learning goals). Academic cultural preparatory courses were instrumental in bridging the gap between the home academic environment and the Australian classroom.</td>
<td>4.2 ISs develop a range of sociocultural coping strategies from social isolation to constructing cultural enclaves and engagement in voluntary or paid work.</td>
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</table>
Quality Criteria

This qualitative study employed the quality criteria of trustworthiness and its four components: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. The following sections provide a definition and description on each trustworthiness component and how the current study addressed that component.

Credibility
According to Guba and Lincoln (1994; 2005), one of the most important trustworthiness criteria is that of credibility. Credibility refers to the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002; Macnee & McCabe, 2008). Credibility establishes both accuracy in reporting original data provided by the participants and indicates plausibility between the data, interpretations and conclusions drawn (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Guba & Lincoln, 1994, 2005).

Credibility in the current research was achieved in a number of ways. The use of multiple methods of data collection and analysis, multiple participants, and multiple perspectives enhanced the credibility of the findings by providing a more holistic explanation and understanding of the phenomenon under study. Participants from APCs and CHCs provided a wide range of experiences and perspectives relating to their adjustment to the host culture. Interviewing the participants over a period of time increased the credibility of the findings, as additional experiences and perspectives were mentioned. Credibility was enhanced by participants’ member checking transcripts, along with asking participants additional information in order to gain clarification of comments from the interview. Finally, the researcher’s position and attempts to mitigate subjectivity were presented.

Transferability
Transferability is concerned with the applicability of the findings to other situations, contexts and participants (Merriam, 1998). It refers to the degree to which the findings of a study can be transferred beyond the bounds of the project. In other words, transferability allows for the knowledge obtained from one context to be applied or transferred to a different context. Transferability can be achieved through “thick description” (Bitsch, 2005, p. 85). By describing a phenomenon in sufficient detail it is possible to evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn are transferable to other times, settings, situations, and people.
Transferability in the current study was achieved through the provision of thick descriptions, incorporating direct quotations from the participants. The context of the current study and detailed descriptions of the participants was provided to enhance transferability. Additionally, a thorough description of processes utilised in the current study has been provided.

**Dependability**
Dependability refers to the stability or consistency of the inquiry processes used over time (Bitsch, 2005). Dependability can be examined through the researcher’s careful consideration in conceptualising the study, collecting the data, interpreting the findings and reporting results. Dependability can be assessed through the dependability audit. If the researcher does not maintain any kind of audit trail, the dependability cannot be assessed and dependability and trustworthiness of the study are diminished. (Brinkmann, 2012). Therefore, it is incumbent on the researcher to report the processes used in the study in detail. The detailed descriptions should allow future researchers to repeat the work even if the final findings may not necessarily be similar. To ensure dependability, the researcher should explain the research design and its implementation including descriptions on what was planned and executed at a strategic level. The data gathering methods also need to be described in detail. The researcher should provide a reflective appraisal of the project and evaluate the effectiveness of the processes of inquiry undertaken (Bitsch, 2005; Cohen et al, 2011).

Dependability in the current study was achieved through the provision of a tangible audit trail. A thorough description of the methodology, in particular the data analysis approaches that were used, allows the reader an opportunity to track and interpret the processes used in the research.

**Confirmability**
Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings of a study can be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers and is “concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are clearly derived from the data (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 392). Confirmability can be achieved through an audit trail and triangulation. Triangulation promotes confirmability as it reduces the effect of investigator bias. Miles and Huberman (1994) consider that a key criterion for confirmability is the extent to which the researcher admits his or her own predispositions. An audit trail provides tangible evidence and is a key technique for establishing confirmability. Confirmability
was achieved in the study through the researcher describing her position in detail, the provision of a detailed audit trail, and an in-depth methodological description.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethics clearance was obtained through The University of Western Australia’s Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval Number RA/4/1/2441. The current study was conducted according to the guidelines stated in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007, updated May 2015). This statement, developed jointly by the National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council and Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee, governs all research in Australia. Ethical aspects relating to informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality of the study are presented.

**Informed Consent**

Informed consent requires the researcher to fully outline the procedures and risks of participating in the research prior to participants providing written consent to participate. Researchers must ensure that participants are not in danger of being physically or psychologically harmed by participating in the research. Being informed refers to participants giving their consent freely based on the information provided to them by the researcher.

Participants in the current study were provided an Information Sheet which outlined the aims of the study, the research methods, the voluntary nature of the study, the right to withdraw, the value of the data to the wider academic community, along with information on data sharing and data storage. The Information Sheet made it clear that by participating, participants agreed to allow the researcher access to university databases to obtain information on their course results and IELTS entry scores. A copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form can be found in Appendix 4.

Participants were recruited through the English Language Centre at the research site. Information Sheets were provided to lecturers at the English Language Centre. These were then distributed among ISs from APCs and CHCs. Potential participants were invited to contact the researcher, through email or text messages, indicating their interest in participating in the research.
An initial email was sent to participants to establish contact and confirm dates and times of meetings, along with providing the Information Sheet (again) and Consent Form. Participants were provided with opportunities to ask questions about the research through email or telephone, and before any interviews. Consent forms were signed prior to the commencement of the first interview. Interviews were conducted at a time and place that was convenient to the participant. These ranged from the researcher’s office to the university café.

Voluntary
Participants involved in a research study must be volunteers and not coerced to participate. The Information Sheet stated that the research was voluntary and that participants could withdraw without reason and without prejudice. The Information Sheets were distributed through the English Language Centre, with those students being interested contacting the researcher. Participants were reminded of the voluntary nature of the research before each interview.

Anonymity
The principle of anonymity means that the participant remains anonymous at all times, ensuring confidentiality and privacy. The current study provided anonymity by creating pseudonyms for each participant immediately after the first interview. Transcripts were named by the pseudonym, with the researcher only referring to participants by these pseudonyms. The anonymity of the university site was ensured through the use of general descriptions.

Confidentiality
Confidentiality refers to assuring participants that any information provided by them will not be made available to anyone who is not directly involved in the study. The researcher ensured certain views expressly stated by participants as confidential were treated as such and not reported or used in the analysis. Following the university ethical protocols, the data has been stored securely on password protected computers at the researcher’s home and office. Provision will be made for the data to be stored for seven years on the university computers once the thesis is completed.

Conclusion
This chapter has set out the methodology of the study. The chapter began by providing the rationale for a qualitative study and the adoption of an interpretivist lens. The
interpretivist approach is appropriate to the current study which explores ISs’ experiences and perceptions of adjustments at an Australian university. The current study was a collective case study involving 17 participants from APCs and CHCs. The corpus of the data for the study was collected through two semi-structured interviews. The data was transcribed and analysed in stages through a process of categorisation, coding and identification of common themes and interconnections. These led to the development of four major propositions and eight sub-propositions. These propositions and sub-propositions are discussed in the next three chapters. The next chapter, Chapter 6, presents the findings and discussions for the academic environment, the first key theme identified from the data analysis.
CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS 1: ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT - HOST AND HOME CULTURES

Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of ISs from APCs and CHCs in their adjustment in studying at an Australian university. From the qualitative data collection and analysis, as described in the previous chapter, four main theoretical propositions and eight sub-propositions emerged to explain participants’ adjustment to studying in a different culture. Three of these propositions and six sub-propositions related to the academic environment, while one proposition and two sub-propositions related to the sociocultural environment. A summary of these propositions and sub-propositions is presented in Table 6.1. These propositions and sub-propositions were constructed based on the versions of reality as presented by the participants.

This chapter presents the findings in relation to Proposition 1 which describes ISs’ experiences and perspectives of the classroom culture in the home and the host cultures. Propositions 2 and 3, which describe learners’ responses to the changed learning environment, are presented in Chapter Seven. Chapter Eight presents the findings in relation to the sociocultural environment covering the fourth main theoretical proposition.
Lack of different social structures

ISs developed a range of social structures from social science

Proposition 1: The social environment is influenced by the nature and type of academic and cultural systems

Proposition 2: Development of academic and cultural environments

Proposition 3: Development of learning behaviours

Proposition 4: Development of CHCs

Proposition 5: Development of AECs

Sub-proposition 1: The value system and cultural heritage of the host country

Sub-proposition 2: The value system and cultural heritage of the home country

Sub-proposition 3: The value system and cultural heritage of the academic environment

Table 1: Summary of the Main Theoretical Propositions and Sub-Propositions

1) The value system and cultural heritage of the host country

2) The value system and cultural heritage of the home country

3) The value system and cultural heritage of the academic environment
Proposition 1: Incongruous Expectations

ISs have incongruous or disparate expectations and experiences in the academic environments of the home and host cultures. This is due to their perceptions of fundamental differences between the home and host academic environments.

Proposition 1 explores the value systems of participants’ home countries which significantly influenced their perceptions of teachers in the host countries. Participant feedback indicated their perception of teachers in their home countries as powerful figures to be respected. This respect is derived from the teachers’ high status as they have ownership of knowledge, and the influence of the wider political and sociocultural environment. Teachers in APCs and CHCs were considered to be knowledge owners and transmitters, a position they acquired based on the expectation and practice that they possess more knowledge than learners. The political, sociocultural landscape of the home cultures is transposed onto the microcosm of the classroom; an extension of the dominant value system of the home country, dictating clearly defined roles for teachers and learners. The autocratic environment of the home countries provides another avenue for this powerful position. As governmental and institutional representatives, teachers have high levels of power and respect, making them authoritative figures that distance themselves from students. This section discusses participants’ perceptions of teachers in their home countries as powerful, authority-centered figures. Teachers’ authority and power positions students as passive and dependent knowledge recipients.

Within Sub-Proposition 1.1, participants’ perceptions of teachers as knowledge owners and transmitters in APCs and CHCs are presented. Teachers were perceived as powerful, distant figures. In this context, students’ roles are defined as knowledge recipients who are passive, unquestioning, dependent listeners that fear and respect teachers, which are intertwining concepts. Within Sub-Proposition 1.2, participants’ perceptions of teachers in the host culture as egalitarian and the consequent influence of that perception on learners’ roles are described. Throughout the various sections of the findings, information relating to APC participants is presented first, followed by information from CHC participants. The findings are presented through the voice of the participants by means of direct quotes. As described in the Ethics section of Chapter Five, pseudonyms were used for all participants to ensure anonymity.
Sub-Proposition 1.1: Contrasting Value Systems
The value systems and wider political and sociocultural context of home countries of ISs from APCs and CHCs are characterised by high power distance and strong collectivist orientations. Thus, ISs have expectations that teachers in all classroom contexts hold an authoritative role as knowledge givers and moral guides.

Teachers’ high status and power led to distant teacher-student interactions in the home cultures. These are reported under the subheadings of knowledge transmission, power and status of teacher, and distance in classroom interactions.

Knowledge Transmission
APC and CHC participants’ versions of reality showed that they considered teachers in their home cultures to be authoritative, powerful knowledge owners with high status. This is possibly influenced by the wider political, sociocultural and religious contexts of the home countries. Teachers in these societies are believed to be knowledge owners. Teaching philosophies, focusing on knowledge ownership and transmission, is reflected in a didactic, lecture-based teaching style with students taking copious notes. The political context of authoritarian governments accords status to teachers who are both governmental and institutional representatives. Teachers are treated with high levels of respect, often feared by students’ as they are perceived as knowledge controllers. This section explains participants’ perceptions of teachers’ possession and transmission of knowledge.

Many participants articulated teacher’s control over knowledge. The KSA participants (Abdul, Jaffar and Miriam) provided insights into the knowledge control and transmission role of teachers. Abdul explained: “There [KSA] just give you the information or give you what you need to know and that’s it”. He explained that some of the teachers “maybe just reading the lecture or let you read this is what you need to know”. Miriam stated, “they [teachers] are giving us knowledge”. Jaffar noted that students “cannot move any step without going back to the lecturer [and] ask are we right because we do not have any confidence”. The constant need to substantiate with teachers that students have obtained the correct information and students’ lack of confidence to think independently highlights the control KSA teachers have over information and knowledge. KSA participants viewed their teachers as information controllers who decide when and how much students are to learn, which positions students as dependent learners.
Similarly, the knowledge transmission role of teachers was described by Iraqi participants, Habib, Minah, and Asmah. Habib referred to teacher-student interactions as information being transferred from “lecturer to student”, where students are required to respect the teacher who “gives the knowledge”. This is based on his belief that teachers “hold a knowledge you are going to benefit from”. Habib explained, “Where I come from, the interaction between the student and the lecturer is not two way relation, it’s one way relation. We had to feed them by the spoon”. Minah noted that teachers “take the whole responsibility, the students have to just receive the knowledge”. Similarly, Asmah referred to the need for students to “sit in class and listen to the teacher”, emphasising that there is “no flexibility” as the students depend on the teachers/supervisors who “gives us the material”. By these accounts, it appears that teachers are in possession and control of knowledge, with students taking the role of passive recipients.

The teachers’ position as knowledge transmitter and owner was also apparent in the comments of the Iranian students (Akbar, Eliza and Parvez). Akbar explained that Iranian teachers are only focused on providing information to the students as “the teacher just come into the class and give you something, tell you something, and then leave the class”. He explained, “It’s not necessary to go to class [at] all … because if you go to final exam and get more than 50% that’s okay”. Eliza substantiated Akbar’s view, describing the information she received as “fixed”. Her role was to learn the information provided by the teacher: “There’s no research, we just have to learn, read this and try to learn this” from the “lectures and lectures are lots [a lot of lectures]”. Participants’ comments highlight that the primary source of information for students is their teachers and recommended books, indicating the didactic, lecture-based teaching style stemming from a teaching philosophy that values content knowledge.

CHC participants also perceived teachers as knowledge owners and transmitters. For example, the respondents from HK (Susan and Edna) and mainland China (Alice, Sabrina, Harry, Jacinta, Wayne, and Serena) recognised teachers as knowledge givers and students as passive learners. They perceived the lack of interaction between teachers and learners as normal. In their view, the teacher’s role was essentially to impart knowledge and assess students’ competence and understanding of that knowledge. Susan commented, “The teachers just teach in the class and “mark[ing] the assignments and that’s all”. As Susan stated, the role of the teacher focused on
knowledge transmission and testing of taught content. CHC teachers, as knowledge masters, test students to ensure they have gained the correct knowledge.

The notion of teachers as information providers and students as passive listeners was apparent in CHC participant comments. Edna stated, “The teacher is just a teacher, do their job to teach”. In clarifying Edna’s comments, the researcher summarised her views. The researcher did this as Edna sometimes had difficulty articulating her thoughts clearly:

Researcher: So in other words the lecturer, the teacher, is the controller of all the information and they decide how much information they want to give you, when they want to give you and your role as the student is to accept all that information?

Edna: Yes, that’s it.

Edna’s perception of the teacher as knowledge transmitter was shared by Wayne. He explained the teacher in China is “serious” and “gives the information”, noting that they maintain the persona of respected individuals who possess the knowledge which students desire to have imparted to them. Harry commented that the role of the teacher is “to stand there and teach and the students just listen”. Jacinta also described teachers as possessors of knowledge who provide information:

They have no skills to teach students and just keep telling you all the knowledge that they know and they just keep telling you and telling you. They give you a lot of information, plenty of information which you don’t really need to do any research about it because they already told you everything.

Jacinta’s comments highlight the passive learning style of students where they receive information without needing to analyse the knowledge provided. This is evident as she added, “I have to remember lots of information but these teachers tell us everything … I don’t really need to do any research”. Her comments imply a critique of the teachers, but a role that is accepted as part of the CHC academic culture.

Similarly, Alice explained that students in her culture spend a substantial amount of class time taking written notes to give appropriate receipt of the teacher’s content delivery. She noted, “In China you write a lot, learn a lot from your notes, my notebook and if we forgot, like if we forget and you don’t understand and you can check your notes, everything is in the notes”. She added, “In China they write a lot of information on the board and then they give you a test about the information … you need the information, a lot of questions, it’s like in China got a lot of paperwork”. Sabrina
explained that students “have to keep quiet” and accept the information as transmitted by the teacher. She said, “We have to say ‘Yes’, we cannot think, we cannot argue”. Additionally, she commented that the “teacher [is] so bad, study PhD but cannot teach because they study alone, think alone, do everything alone”. Here, Sabrina is critical of the teaching style, which implies dissatisfaction with content delivery. Serena explained, “In China, it’s like they provide everything … notes, textbook. We always believe like textbook is the golden book, you have to memorise them and teachers only use this in class”. CHC participants’ comments highlight passive learning in the home classrooms with an emphasis on teachers’ possession of knowledge and students’ recording of that knowledge.

Participants’ comments also highlight the content-based teaching style practiced in CHCs. This content is subsequently tested, encouraging students to become passive learners. Some participants’ comments signal resistance to the impersonal, content-based teaching style of patriarchal cultures. Yet, there is also a resignation that these characteristics are ultimately inherent in CHCs.

Participant accounts show that the high level status and power of teachers in APCs and CHCs are similar, with participants highlighting the status, power and knowledge ownership of teachers in their home cultures. As knowledge givers, APC and CHC teachers focused both on knowledge transmission and testing of that knowledge. As knowledge controllers, teachers from both cultures have a high status in society and are powerful in the classroom, as described in the next section.

**Power and Status of Teacher**

Due to the teachers’ possession of knowledge, they are considered powerful and have high status in both APCs and CHCs. APC participants emphasised that cultural norms in society dictate respect for teachers. Abdul mentioned that we “have to be respectful of older people like teachers”. Minah explained, “The teacher, the lecturer is a big man and you believe in his ideas … you can accept almost everything he says”. However, she also added that “if you want to share or give your idea it might be getting in an embarrassed situation”. Minah elaborated on the power of teachers:

[I]f some issues wants to [needs] more explanation or to discuss another part of another side of the topic we couldn’t do that. We have to get only one side of the topic and one side of the subject. And if someone try to explain his point of view the teacher will say, like, “Shut up, shut up!”
Minah explained the situation as being stressful due to the lack of opportunity to deal with the issues raised, as students’ views are squashed and teachers assert their power. Miriam mentioned that the “lecturer has his own specialty and there is no speaking freely to him”, implying that teachers are powerful. These comments highlight both the status and power of teachers in APCs.

Other APC participants explained the powerful nature of teachers in their institutions, especially in relation to influencing the thoughts of students through control over knowledge transmission. However, this situation is not just limited to the classroom environment but a reflection of the wider society. Asmah explained that in Iraq “they are not allowed to talk policy or rules of the country”, emphasising the lack of freedom to express thoughts in Iraqi society. She explained the legitimisation of the teacher’s authority is based on institutional authority, with teachers being representatives of university policy. This is translated into the classroom environment, as Asmah noted that “always the student should follow the teacher rules or teacher’s policy”. Minah explained that the student has “no more confidence to give your opinion, you have to follow the lecturer mind, lecturer thoughts” because this is assumed to be superior to the way students think. Similarly, Habib explained the nature of authority in Iraqi society: “always there is authorities of government, parents, teachers who tell you what is right and wrong”. The passive, subservient role of the individual is emphasised in Habib’s comments. As a representative of the university, the teacher is an embodiment of the policies and procedures of the university, both a formal authority figure and rule enforcer. APC participants’ comments highlight the context in which teachers are viewed, emphasising the authority and consequently power that is invested in teachers. All content is determined by the powerful entity, teachers, seen as controllers of knowledge and who deem when and how much of it to transmit to students. Thus, the classroom appears to be an autocratic, authority-centered environment similar to the wider Arabic-Persian society based on participant accounts.

However, the Iranian participants noted that they have the ability to express their opinions, with Parvez being involved in organising political protests. However, Parvez and Eliza expressed their frustration with the lack of political freedoms in Iran despite having fought for it for numerous years. Parvez noted, “We wanted political freedoms and these kinds of things and we still don’t have political freedoms”. The Iranian political context is significant with Iranian students having less subservience to political
authority. The relevance of the political environment to the academic climate is apparent as the former is often mirrored in the classroom.

CHC participants also indicated that students are expected to respect and unquestioningly accept teachers’ authority in all matters of learning. Susan’s comments emphasise that they are not allowed to “discuss with the teachers if their idea is right or wrong”. Susan explained, “It is what the teacher says and that’s all”. Susan’s example of a draft assignment she once submitted to a teacher for feedback provides insights into the need for unquestioning acceptance of teachers’ views. In this instance, the assignment was significantly rewritten by the teacher to the extent that it was no longer the student’s original idea, demonstrating the power of the teacher:

In our education it’s what the teacher says and that’s all. We will not discuss with the teachers if their idea is right or wrong. I remember one time we were talking about a unit and then a group project and a concept. Then we finished the draft assignment, then we give the lecturer to see and he say, “Here maybe can be like that.” Then we follow his idea so it seems like it’s not our idea inside anymore. We just do the teachers requirement.

Susan’s comments indicate unquestioning obedience to the teacher who, as the knowledge controller, was able to alter students’ assignments significantly. Participant comments imply the absoluteness of teachers’ power.

High levels of respect for teachers obliged participants to trust knowledge transmitted by teachers, illustrating their power. Sabrina explained that students “have to respect older people, we have to say ‘Yes’”. Jacinta commented that “teachers force you to trust what they trust and they just let you know what they think you should know”. Harry explained that students cannot openly critique their authority-centered teachers. The following extract of the interview with Harry demonstrates the teachers’ power:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Harry</th>
<th>Basically we are taught not to question it. I know there’s a few questions I would like to ask but I wouldn’t ask them.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>Because I think that the teacher wouldn’t answer me anyway, wouldn’t give me a straight answer. So better not to question it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Harry’s comments suggest a lack of trust in the teacher’s ability to provide direct answers. Implied in Harry’s comments is discomfort with questioning or challenging teachers due to the large power differential.
Similarly, Serena described CHC teachers as being powerful as they have “really high status … they are really not happy [for us] to question them”. The power of CHC teachers and their dislike of being challenged is illustrated in the following conversation:

Serena: In China … we don't normally ask tricky questions to the teachers because they will feel embarrassed if they can't answer the question and they're probably not happy for you to ask us so many questions. For me, I don't want to challenge them. Some people think it's kind of, like, challenging them when asking the question in front of all the classmates.

Researcher So why wouldn’t you challenge the teacher in China?
Serena Because I don't want to get in trouble.
Researcher That's interesting that you don't want to get into trouble. What sort of trouble would you get into?
Serena Well, they don't like me and they think I'm challenging their [knowledge] like they're knowledgeable.

Serena’s comments indicate the power of CHC teachers who should not be challenged due to their status and ownership of knowledge. As indicated by participants, CHC classrooms do not allow for questioning or challenging of teachers and students comply based on respect for the teacher’s position.

Unquestioning obedience to teachers is shown through student silences in CHC classrooms due to fear and respect as indicated in participant comments. Alice noted, “we are afraid of our teachers” which made the students conform and accept teachers’ views. Alice further stated that students in her home culture are not allowed to speak, especially when the teacher is speaking, as they would be told to leave the classroom for being disrespectful of the teacher’s authority: “If you speak up, if you speak out in class, if I see you speak with a friend, ‘you two just get out’”. In addition, if work set by teachers were not completed there would be serious repercussions. Alice noted, “If we don’t hand our homework [in], you've got a big problem”. In societies which are primarily authoritarian, there is a strong element of fear which is reflected in the classroom. Alice provided a further dimension for students’ fear of teachers, which highlights not only the teacher’s power but also provides an insight into the parent-teacher relationship. She noted teachers would make contact with the family if the student misbehaved. Alice said, “We are afraid our teacher will call our parents or just
[want] to meet our family, big problem”. In societies where teachers are held in high esteem, parents tend to accept teachers’ views. Hence, the repercussions of student misbehaviours are considerable. This emphasises the powerful hold the teacher figure has on CHC students, as the consequences of non-compliance can be severe, including harsh punishments and parental involvement. The views expressed by participants indicate that they consider teachers to have complete control over them and the content being taught, a reflection of their authority and power. CHC participants perceived their teachers as powerful knowledge owners who had to be feared and respected.

**APCs: Assessment and Power of the Teacher**

A different dimension to CHC participants was APC participants’ feedback on assessment marking. APC participants’ comments provided a tangible example of teachers’ classroom power through summative assessments. According to APC participants, assessments are marked subjectively with little evidence to indicate the use of marking criteria. Thus, the students’ academic future rests in the hands of teachers’ as authority figures with whom there can be little disagreement. Parvez described a lecturer with an arbitrary marking rubric which seemed unfair to the students:

> I had a lecturer that said, ‘Look 20 is for God, 19 is for me, 18 for the top student and then 17.’ He stopped at 17. He was serious actually, he was not joking.

Similarly, Eliza and Asmah described experiences in their respective countries with assessment marking where the teacher has the final say and was not to be questioned. In Asmah’s view, “We can’t say when they mark the projects that the mark is not fair for us”. She explained that the teacher is only interested in the final mark and not in the learning process, with little consideration for student’s personal circumstances:

> The teachers in my country are very strict and there’s no flexibility especially when they give mark to students. They didn’t care about their circumstances if they face some problems or health problems or family problems. They didn’t care about that, they just focus on the test, on the work of the students. They didn’t care about what’s the effect on the students.

Based on participant comments, teachers’ lack of accountability and compassion in assessment marking caused participants some frustration. However, as passive dependent learners, they were not in a position to question teachers’ authority in matters of learning regardless of perceptions of unfairness.
Both APC and CHC participants’ comments provide examples of teachers’ power in the classroom. Due to their high status and authority, teachers’ actions cannot be questioned, regardless of students’ perceptions or possible dissatisfaction. Due to this high status in society and the classroom, and their position as knowledge owners, teachers are in a powerful position in APC and CHC classrooms. These conclusions were derived based on the participants’ versions of reality of their home learning environments.

**Distance in Classroom Interactions**

As a result of a focus on content delivery, teacher-student interactions in APC and CHC classrooms tend to be distant. For example, Jaffar’s comments (a KSA participant) explained both the authority of teachers and some of the paradoxes inherent in an authoritarian environment. He explained that the teacher is an “eminent figure”, “special, like a VIP”, which creates barriers between teachers and students. Jaffar stated:

> We [the students] are here (gesticulating low status) and they [the teachers] are there (indicating upwards). Unfortunately, there is a barrier between the students and the lecturer in our country so we are there, you are here, which is make us not so easy to study.

Jaffar made the analogy that teachers are like “little Hitlers”, emphasising their dictatorial nature. The following conversation demonstrates not only the power of KSA teachers but also their authoritarian nature which made students fearful, causing distant teacher-student interactions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jaffar:</th>
<th>More than this, more than this, they have something, you know how Hitler think?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researcher:</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaffar:</td>
<td>They think same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher:</td>
<td>They’re like little Hitlers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaffar:</td>
<td>So this is what makes gaps between us and the teacher so we go to the students, we are scared we ask here. We are very careful of the way that we speak so we give a lot of consideration to many nonsense things in order to have his mercy or to have his kindness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant comments imply the authoritarian nature of the KSA classroom positions students to comply with authority. Jaffar explained this as “lecturer phobia”, where students are so afraid of the lecturer that they are not comfortable articulating their views. Jaffar’s comments convey frustration, as he says students have to take many
“nonsense things” into consideration. However, they have unquestioning acceptance of authority as they are duty-bound and, according to Abdul, obliged to be “respectful of older people.” Jaffar also stated that “we have a great respect to the oldest in our country” and “we have great respect for the teacher because he is old and knows much”. Being respectful of those in authority involves deference, which can be seen in the use of forms of address as well.

Similarly, Miriam highlighted differences between students and teachers, stating that “in my culture, there is a difference between you (the student) and the teachers” as the teachers act in a “superior” manner. Miriam explained that teachers’ superiority caused distant teacher-student interactions. Both Miriam and Abdul emphasised their country is “conservative”. Abdul said, “We are very conservative for our religion, for our traditions.” One aspect of conservatism is the inherent power structures and the necessity to adhere to this. There are expectations that students conform to the traditions of the society where teachers are figures of authority. These comments emphasise the wide distance that exists between students and teachers in KSA classrooms and highlights the students’ fearful nature, reflective of the wider, political autocratic environment.

Distance in teacher-student interactions is apparent in the Iraqi context as reflected by participants’ responses, which refer to the necessity of using formal titles when interacting with those in superior positions. This is based on cultural beliefs which emphasise politeness mechanisms inherent in cultures with high power distances, thus causing distant teacher-student relationships. Asmah mentioned that she had been taught to refer to her teachers by title as “we have to use high respect words for older people especially teachers and bosses” reflecting the “gap” between students and teachers in her culture. Minah stated, “We must have more respect for our teachers because they are the big [powerful] man” and “believe in his [teacher’s] ideas and accept everything he says”. Similarly, Habib viewed the teacher in his culture as someone to be highly respected, as an individual “who has more knowledge” than the student which automatically places teachers on a higher plane, investing teachers with greater power. By these accounts, formal forms of address are necessary to maintain distinctions between those with power (the teacher) and those without power (the students).
Iranian participants indicated the existence of distance and barriers in the teacher/student relationship. In Parvez’s view, the gap between teacher and student exists as teachers have a superior stance which can be seen as a derivation of knowledge possession the students are keen to learn. This approach made Akbar feel “they are not responsible about you”. However, the findings obtained from the Iranian participants indicated some differences compared to those from KSA and Iraq. While all three APCs have similar cultures, religions and backgrounds, there are some unique differences. For example, the political environment is different, especially since the Iranian revolution as explained in Chapter Four.

Hierarchical relationships, high-level status and power of teachers in CHC classrooms imply distant teacher-student interactions. In Alice’s view, “there is distance like generation gap … they say everything right.” According to Wayne, the teacher is “serious and professional” as they are “masters of knowledge”. In his view, the teacher’s “serious” persona caused distant interactions. Harry commented, “Teachers usually distance themselves from students”. A large teacher-student distance is found in education systems where lectures are the only means of transmitting knowledge to large classes of students.

CHC participants noted a distinction between the behaviour of the teacher inside and outside the classroom. Wayne stated, “We can talk to the teacher outside of class”, while Jacinta commented that “in China you can still ask a lot of questions, any question you want to the teacher outside class”. While there is little tolerance of questioning in the class, which can be seen as challenging teachers authority, there are opportunities for discussions and clarifications outside of class on an individual or small group basis. However, teachers’ views ultimately need to be adhered to, as challenging the teacher through questioning is not an accepted part of CHCs as indicated by participant comments.

**APCs: Religious Context in Causing Distant Teacher-Student Interactions**

APC participants provided an additional, unique influence on distant teacher-student interactions. In these cultures, the basis of teachers’ power is their political and social authority as moral and intellectual educators. The religious context assumes great significance, as the teacher’s role is clearly defined as an Islamic educator, in keeping with the stratified characteristic of Arab cultures. The hegemonic discourse in APC
environments is Islamic where the teacher has a “preacher-like” image and is the conduit of knowledge (Elyas & Picard, 2010, p. 138). This section provides insights into the role of Islam in providing a framework for teacher-student interactions, typical of a culture of faith. APC states are non-secular with strong state authoritarianism that dictates discipline and control, which is transposed into the classroom environment.

Religious worldviews are translated into the classroom environment. Based on responses from APC participants, Muslim religious culture places emphasis on respect for teachers. The religious lens forms the predominant aspects of participants’ worldview. Some participants equated teachers’ positions as being the equivalent of a God-like representative or a superior higher-level entity. Habib referred to the teacher as “God”, which explains the respect and esteem that students have for the teaching staff. He stated, “This is a part of your worshipping God”. While part of this is the politeness mechanisms inherent in Muslim cultures, the religious influence on such behaviours cannot be minimised. Jaffar also commented that “religion and culture are linked” and “Islam sharpened our skills and behaviours”.

In contrast, the Iranian respondents’ perceptions of local teachers and their authority indicated an element of hostility. The Iranians appeared to be frustrated with teachers’ autocratic, disinterested behaviours. They perceived their teachers to be unaccountable to anyone. Parvez described the teacher as behaving like a God, highlighting the lack of accountability. However, his reference to the teacher as a “God” is significantly different to that of the Iraqi and KSA participants. With the Iranians, the notion of respect, based on being a representative of authority and of religion is not as apparent. This could be due to the version of Islam practiced by the Persians, the difference between Sunni and Shia Muslims as noted in Chapter Four. The use of the term “God” is inherently different in tone and attitude as compared to the respondents from KSA and Iraq who viewed the teacher as a religious authority, a preacher in addition to being an educator. Regardless of these differences, the religious context has considerable influence on students’ perceptions of their teachers who, as authority figures in cultures which place a high value on politeness, are highly respected.

**Summary of Sub-Proposition 1.1**

Teachers in APCs and CHCs are perceived to be knowledge owners who transmit the necessary information to students for the purposes of knowledge mastery. All
participants perceived teachers in their home environments as powerful, authoritative figures that are owed respect and unquestioning obedience. This position provides teachers with power and authority and makes learners both fearful and respectful. Underlying the role of teachers as knowledge givers and dominant figures in the classroom is teachers’ position as power holders. While teachers are generally held in high esteem by students and society at large, there is some implied criticism. Regardless, high power distances between teachers and students exist in both CHC and APC classrooms based on the accounts presented by the participants.

**Sub-Proposition 1.2: Egalitarianism**

*ISs perceive the academic environment of the host culture to be egalitarian.*

This sub-proposition describes participants’ perspectives of the egalitarian Australian classroom in which knowledge is co-constructed in an environment where there is freedom to express thought, act and discuss, led by knowledge facilitators. Participants perceived the Australian classroom environment as having low power distance. Teacher-student interactions in this context were less hierarchical and more collegial than in their home cultures, focusing on students being active participants in the learning process. Participants explained they were engaged in a process of knowledge discovery through questioning and critical thinking, facilitated by the teacher’s personality and an open learning environment.

A key element of the Australian classroom, as identified by APC participants, was teachers’ approachability that led to the creation of a collegial learning environment. For example, Jaffar explained the teacher’s friendliness and approachability made him very comfortable, allowing him to express his views which facilitated student learning.

Jaffar provides the example of a lecturer he met in Australia who physically knelt down to explain a concept to him, an indication of the smaller distance between students and teachers in Australian classrooms:

Jaffar: When explaining and he was doing like this, he was kneeling doing some practical things with me. ‘Are you happy, Jaffar?’ Then he stand up. I can’t forget it. It is a stamp in my heart.

Researcher: Because he came down to your level?

Jaffar: Down to earth and he’s a prof [essor].
Jaffar’s comments suggest that informality, which made him comfortable in the classroom, provided him with an encouraging learning experience. Asmah explained that Australian teachers give students the opportunity and time to think about what they want to say which is beneficial for their learning as “all points of view are respected”. She noted that Australian teachers created learning environments which allowed for differing points of view in the classroom. Habib referred to the Australian classroom environment as promoting “interaction knowledge”. These comments emphasise the knowledge facilitation role of Australian teachers which encouraged students to explore information for themselves and to construct knowledge through discussions with peers and teachers.

The Australian classroom environment was perceived as giving students the “freedom to think” (Abdul). Minah noted the relaxed classroom environment as she felt “more freedom here, more comfortable and less stress compared to my country”. Minah further explained, “The atmosphere of the classroom is different … more relaxed and you can go to the teacher”. Habib noted that the freedom in the classroom made him feel there was “respect for the student as an individual”. He believed the Australian classroom environment was less restrictive on his learning as “there is more freedom and the student is more individual in doing his thing. He have [has] more valid opinion”. Jaffar emphasised that the culture is “so free, more freedom”, not just in the classroom but also in the wider society. The open classroom environment in Australia allowed him to explore his intellectual curiosity, making him feel “competent” in learning: “Yes, yes … this make us competent in our study and competent in class and research”. Jaffar’s perceptions of the Australian classroom environment as being conducive to the expression of individual views were also noted by Asmah. She explained, “Here, it’s very free and more freedom, that people can talk about everything”. Asmah commented, “If I want to express my idea or feeling I don’t face problem. I can deal with the teachers and give my opinion. I think this is good”. Based on APC participants’ comments, they felt comfortable expressing their opinions in a classroom environment which gave them freedom to think.

Teachers’ personality traits and behaviours are instrumental in the creation of interactive, egalitarian classrooms. APC participants described Australian teachers as approachable, friendly, encouraging and caring, which highlights the low power distance in teacher-student interactions. Miriam said the teachers here treat students
with respect. Miriam explained that she was comfortable with Australian teachers who, despite providing knowledge, are still able to maintain an approachable, friendly demeanour:

Actually dealing with teachers over here is something I felt very comfortable with because teachers over here, they treat us like friends although they are giving us knowledge. But really they act with us like friends, with respect.

Minah described her higher levels of comfort in Australian classrooms where “teachers are like friends” and “more casual, more friend”. Minah compared her learning experiences in Iraq, commenting, “And the teachers here are more friends and they give you opportunity to plan what you want to say… and just respect all the points of view”. Asmah described her interactions as being “like friends when I speak to the teacher”.

Similarly, Akbar explained that the teachers’ approachability was very important to him as he was comfortable asking questions when he was unclear about something: “I think they are responsible about you and the good thing – they answer all your questions.” Parvez mentioned that the “lecturer in here is more friendly, helpful”, while Eliza said “the teachers here, they encourage the student”. Participants noted that the approachability of the teacher was instrumental in creating a positive learning environment. In such an environment, APC participants felt comfortable and relaxed, thus were more receptive to learning. More importantly, they felt valued which led to them becoming active and involved participants of their learning in a collegial environment.

CHC participants’ comments emphasised that Australian teachers’ personality was instrumental in encouraging knowledge discovery and the development of critical thinking. Susan noted Australian teachers’ attitude was significant in providing students with the opportunity to develop questioning attitudes, one of the basic tenets of information discovery. Susan stated:

I find the teachers here are encouraging and they ask us to question them, not just listen to them. I like [that] the teachers ask questions. I find the teachers here also like us to ask questions to them.

Similarly, Alice noted Australian teachers’ encouragement of questioning attitudes:

Here the teacher likes [that] we argue with them. The teacher always like give the topic on something and everybody must give you opinion. Talk, talk, talk.
In Alice’s view, arguing and giving answers helps students to “understand information totally”. Similarly, Sabrina noted that students are able to “argue”, as Australian teachers encourage questioning and critical thinking.

Sabrina noted that the Australian education system was more “open”, allowing students to express their views, something that is discouraged in her culture. She mentioned, “In here it is different. They don’t concern about the result but the original … how you can get formula, the logical thinking”. Jacinta explained that teachers in Australia guide students in their learning process without providing all the answers:

Here the teachers, they gave us some guidelines, they ask all the questions we can’t understand. But the most of the part they wouldn’t tell us [the answer]. They’d just let us to do the research first and they come back and ask what we have found out.

Jacinta further noted that teachers in Australia provided guidelines and students are expected to discover knowledge for themselves through a process of knowledge investigation, where the development of a questioning attitude is of crucial importance. She mentioned that teaching in Australia “encourages students to learn by themselves” which “really make me understand more and remember more”. CHC participants’ comments show recognition and appreciation of an egalitarian classroom which enabled the development of questioning and critical thinking skills.

CHC participants noted that the teaching approach led to interactive classrooms. According to Wayne, the teaching approach, involving a combination of lectures and tutorials, allowed for more interaction:

[A]fter the lecture you’ve still got tutorial so you have questions. You can ask in tutorial and student will get more opportunity to learn to practice, to communicate with their teachers during the small classes like tutorials and seminars and labs.

Wayne explained that there was also an expectation to interact with peers: “Here you have to communicate very well with your classmates”. Similarly, Harry described the classroom environment as having “more interaction between teachers and students”. Harry’s comments provide an apt description of the contrast between the Australian classroom environment and that of the students’ home cultures.

Teachers here are still given the authority to do whatever they need to in the classroom but they usually won’t exercise the power unless they need to. So it’s more of a father and child relationship.

Harry commented that students in Australia are “taught to think in different ways and to think of solutions in different ways”. Thus, Australian teachers’ caring attitudes and the
interactive classroom environment were contributory factors towards participants learning, as they understood elements of knowledge discovery. Participants’ comments highlight the low power distance and consequent egalitarianism in the classroom which created a conducive environment in which they could express their views clearly and comfortably.

Summary of Sub-Proposition 1.2

APC and CHC participants’ comments indicate they welcome the change to an egalitarian, informal classroom with opportunities for expressing their views. They perceived the Australian classroom environment as interactive and relaxed with smaller distances between teachers and students. Participants perceived teachers in Australia as knowledge facilitators, who encouraged learning and did not exercise power and authority. Their comments highlighted that knowledge in Australian universities is viewed as being the outcome of a process of discovery, rather than a process of transmission as in APCs and CHCs. As knowledge facilitators, teachers in Australia create an environment which provides opportunities for students to explore knowledge through an intellectual process. This process involves testing of opinions through discussions to accepting and/or questioning views presented by others including their teachers.

Summary and Discussion of Proposition 1

Proposition 1 presented the findings in relation to the academic environments of participants’ home cultures (APC and CHC) and the Australian host culture. Participants’ expectations, derived from experiences in the home learning environment, shows the prevalence of contrasting value systems between the home and host cultures. Table 6.2 summarises participants’ perceptions of teachers in the home and host cultures as identified from the findings presented in Proposition 1. In both APCs and CHCs, teachers are perceived as authoritarian, knowledge owners who are impersonal. Having derived their authority from political, moral and religious contexts, classroom interactions in APCs and CHCs are impersonal and distant. The behaviour of students in any classroom is significantly influenced by the teachers’ behaviours and attitudes. In highly controlled, authority-centred classrooms, students are passive learners and focus on content memorisation. There is little opportunity for interactions in classrooms with large power distances. In contrast, participants perceived teachers in the host culture as egalitarian, knowledge facilitators who encouraged knowledge discovery in a personal,
low-power distance classroom environment. Students in this environment focus on participating actively and on knowledge acquisition as friendly, egalitarian teachers encourage greater participation from the students.

Table 6.2: Comparison of Participants’ Perspectives of Teachers in their Home (APC or CHC) and Host Australian Cultures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Home Country (APC or CHC)</th>
<th>Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political philosophy</td>
<td>Authoritarianism</td>
<td>Egalitarianism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching pedagogy</td>
<td>Knowledge giving</td>
<td>Knowledge facilitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner Response</td>
<td>Knowledge memorisation &amp; mastery</td>
<td>Knowledge processing &amp; understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Distance</td>
<td>High power distance</td>
<td>Low power distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious/Moral context</td>
<td>Religious figures of respect (APC)</td>
<td>Secular figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-Student relationships</td>
<td>Impersonal</td>
<td>Personal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The distinct differences between the home and host cultures, as presented in Table 6.2, may appear insurmountable. However, participants’ responses to the knowledge facilitation role of teachers in the host environment imply both an understanding and an appreciation of the new environment. This is in keeping with Li’s (2009) study which indicated that challenging old knowledge in order to advance new knowledge was an important goal for the Chinese learner.

Teachers in APCs derive their authority from being knowledge owners. In the APC context, participant accounts indicate teachers are religious and institutional representatives who are also viewed as having ownership of knowledge. The views of APC participants are consistent with existing literature, which highlight the powerful, authoritative position of the teacher emphasising their lack of accountability (Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Elyas & Picard, 2013). Elyas and Picard (2013) explain moral contexts which determine the identity of the Arab/Muslim teacher, highlighting teachers’ relationships to the institution and their professional identity. As institutional representatives, APC teachers are representatives of university policies. Consequently, students do not have the right to question teachers’ authority, as doing so would be tantamount to questioning the authority of the institution itself.

The second moral context for the Arab/Muslim teacher’s identity is based on their traditional and societal identity. Participants’ comments substantiate the views of Jamjoon (2010), who noted that as knowledge possessors, teachers occupy a high status and clearly defined cultural and religious mores define the Arab/Muslim teachers’ identity. In APCs, the teacher is the absolute authority, deriving this position from
God/Allah. Therefore, students cannot question teachers’ authority because the teacher assumes fundamental responsibility for the moral outcome of classroom choices. The moral code in the classroom focuses on the teacher imparting knowledge, as a figure of authority aiming to “fill” the “empty minds” of their students who cultivate the habit of listening (Richardson, 2004, p. 433). APC participants described the teachers’ role as an authority figure, leading them to have specific expectations which they bring with them into the Australian classroom environment.

Based on participant accounts, the findings presented in Proposition 1 are consistent with other cultures which have large power distances. In these cultures, teachers initiate all communication (Hofstède, 1991). Students are not at liberty to interrupt or request clarification in the classroom environment. There is a deliberate attempt in APCs to maintain large distances between students and teachers. This distance is a consequence of APC teachers’ power and status in society as moral role models and educators who possess knowledge which is superior to others in society. Dimmock and Walker’s (2005) model of educational leadership, presented in Chapter Four, examines the influence of culture on educational leadership. The model focuses on four quadrants of educational leadership of which teaching and learning is one quadrant that contains teacher-student relations (Dimmock & Walker, 2005). In the context of the current study the teaching and learning quadrant, which highlights the different aspects of teacher-student relationships, is relevant as it explains the power differential.

Based on participant comments, high power distance is apparent in APCs. Prowse and Goddard’s (2010) comparative study between Doha and Canada found that students from Arab/Muslim cultures view teachers as authority figures and were respectful, polite and used formal terms of address, indicating high power distance. As teachers derive power from the religious, political context, it is representative of a higher level of power which students do not challenge. Similar to the APC participants in the current study, teachers in Arab societies are highly respected for their religious knowledge, with teaching in the Arab states largely didactic and teacher-directed with a strong focus on knowledge transmission (Faour & Muasher, 2011; Labidi, 1992). In recent times, particularly from around 2000, APCs have begun to review teaching pedagogies to increase student participation, but the power of the teacher is still considerable (El-Baz, 2007; Faour & Muasher, 2011). It is necessary to acknowledge the intrinsic power of culture which determines an individual’s identity.
From the views provided by CHC participants, teachers are viewed as powerful, authoritative, knowledge owners, while learners are seen as dependent, knowledge recipients. The views of the participants are consistent with the moulding orientation of teaching (Gao & Watkins, 2002) presented in Figure 4.2, where the key purpose of teaching is mastery of knowledge demonstrated by positive achievement on exams. In this view of teaching, students are passive acceptors of knowledge and the teachers are the all-knowing entity (Chan, 1999; Jin & Cortazzi, 2002). Ginsberg’s (1992) observation of the teacher’s role in China as the ultimate decision-maker in all matters of learning is substantiated in the perceptions of the participants in the current study. CHC participants unquestioningly accepted knowledge provided by their teachers, a result also found by Doyle (2005) who noted that the teacher was the key source of knowledge for the Chinese student. Passive, unquestioning acceptance by CHC learners highlights their dependence on the teacher who is the respected authority. Both the findings of this study and the published research present CHC learners as having a particular identity which is transferred into the host learning environment, setting up specific expectations of teachers and learners.

CHC participants highlighted the text-based nature of Chinese classrooms, which lends itself to teachers as knowledge possessors and transmitters. Consequently, participants were not comfortable with questioning teachers’ authority with whom they shared a distant relationship in the classroom setting. Wang and Farmer (2008) found similar results, stating that knowledge comprehension and transmission is a vital aspect of teaching methods in China which is largely text or content-oriented. Furthermore, in large power distance societies like China, the educational process is teacher-centred where the teacher is the “guru” who determines the intellectual path to be followed (Hofstede, 1994, p. 34).

CHC teachers are also moral guides who are viewed as authoritative parents (Kember, 1996). In CHCs, teachers are considered to be the wisest and most knowledgeable people in society, in possession of great moral character (Zhang, 2002). Respect is an instrumental aspect of Chinese learning and is based on the Confucian thought of learning as having both moral and social aspects. Given the importance attached to knowledge, seen as a means to a meaningful life, it is understandable that teachers are held in high esteem, giving rise to large power distances. Large power distance is
manifested in CHC classrooms through formal forms of address and unquestioning adherence to teachers’ instructions. Chinese children are brought up to revere and admire their teachers who possess knowledge, can deliver wisdom and enable students to overcome their learning difficulties (Hofstede, 2001). As teachers have great knowledge, they are in a superior position while students are their obedient subordinates (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). Students are not in a position to question, but implicitly accept teachers’ authority. This was highlighted in the findings of the current study based on participant accounts. Teachers, by virtue of being knowledge masters, are above students, characteristic of hierarchical relationships inherent in CHCs.

However, outside of the CHC classroom, teacher-student interactions can be less distant. Outside of the classroom, students are able to obtain clarification and have discussions with their teachers, although ultimately the teachers’ views prevail. Biggs’ observation that teacher-student interactions outside of the formal classroom environment were “typically marked if not by warmth then by a sense of responsibility with mutual respect” (1996, p. 274) is supported in this study. As CHC teachers view themselves as being responsible for both the cognitive and pastoral welfare of their students, they are very caring and nurturing and build relationships with their students and parents outside of the classroom environment (Ho, 2001; Jin & Cortazzi, 2002). Chinese teachers believe their authoritarianism is justified as it reflects care and concern for the student (Ho, 2001). The ‘paradox of the Chinese teacher’, where relationships differ considerably in and outside the classroom, are representative of the “complex nature of social roles and relationships in collectivistic cultures” (Ho, 2001, p. 108). The findings of this study indicate the significant influence of Confucian values on the CHC academic context even though Confucianism as a philosophy has evolved and developed since its inception centuries ago (Bond, 1991; de Bary & Chaffee, 1989).

**Conclusion**

This chapter presented the findings in relation to Proposition 1. Proposition 1 provides insights into the different value systems of home and host cultures which significantly influenced APC and CHC participants’ learning experiences and expectations. However, participants were able to note the differences between the home and host cultures and alter their prior expectations to suit the new learning environment. This understanding and appreciation of the changed learning environment is the first stage in recognising the incongruity between the academic cultures of home and host cultures. A
mismatch between participants’ expectations of the roles of teachers and learners caused confusion and displacement when they were confronted with the Australian academic environment which is egalitarian with low-power distance and an individualist orientation.

The following chapter, Chapter Seven, presents learners’ responses to the changed learning environment which covers Propositions 2 and 3. Proposition 2 identifies the challenges faced by participants due to contrasting values systems, while Proposition 3 describes participants’ motivation which led to the development of a range of coping strategies.
CHAPTER SEVEN
FINDINGS 2: ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT – LEARNERS’ RESPONSES

Introduction

This chapter is the second findings chapter. It presents the data on Propositions 2 and 3 (see Table 5.1 in Chapter Five), which focuses on learners’ responses to a changed learning environment in the host culture. These differences were due to different value systems between the home and host cultures as identified in Proposition 1. This chapter begins by explaining Proposition 2 outlining the challenges faced by participants in the host culture due to a mismatch in expectations, derived from learning experiences in their home cultures. These challenges were managed by participants to differing degrees, through the development of coping strategies. Proposition 3 explains the strategies developed by participants in response to the challenges encountered in the host academic environment. Throughout the chapter, information relating to APC participants is presented first followed by information from CHC participants, with all participants identified by pseudonyms.

Proposition 2 – Confusion and displacement

The incongruity between ISs’ expectations of the roles of teachers and learners initially creates confusion and displacement in the Australian academic environment.

Participants faced challenges due to a mismatch between their expectations, framed from prior learning experiences, and actual experiences in the host culture. Challenges identified by the participants included working in collaborative settings, developing independent learning behaviours both in classroom interactions and in PhD supervisory relationships. These are presented in Sub-Proposition 2.1. These challenges were influenced by a lack of EL proficiency, which is discussed in Sub-Proposition 2.2.

Sub-Proposition 2.1: Challenges

Due to differences in academic environments, ISs face challenges in adjusting to the host academic culture, which emphasises active rather than passive learning.

This sub-proposition presents the main challenges faced by APC and CHC participants due to differences in academic cultures between the host and home countries.
Participant challenges are reported under the two sub-headings of collaborative learning and independent learning, with particular emphasis on HDR supervision.

**Collaborative Learning**

An expectation of the Australian learning environment is that ISs will participate in collaborative learning. It is assumed ISs possess knowledge and understanding of group dynamics to participate effectively in collaborative learning. However, APC participants’ comments indicated their lack of familiarity with collaborative learning and the cultural inhibitions they faced in communicating in collaborative settings. For example, Akbar commented on his lack of familiarity with group work: “in Iran we didn’t learn how to work in a team”. Similarly, Asmah said, “In my country [Iraq] always individual work”. Minah also noted that in Iraq “there is no discussion. I found there is a group here. We don't have such things”. Miriam explained her initial reticence to collaborative learning, which was due to cultural issues: “It was difficult in the beginning. I was so shy to deal with them; it was really hard [because] culture from culture is very different”. Sometimes, participants found themselves unable to participate:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>When there are group discussions in class do you think you can participate?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abdul</td>
<td>Not much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul</td>
<td>Maybe it depends on my personality. Sometimes I’m shy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abdul’s brief explanation highlights that lack of familiarity with collaborative learning can be compounded by individual personality traits such as shyness.

Similarly, CHC participants commented on their unfamiliarity with collaborative learning. Alice explained that it was primarily “individual assignment, you do it by yourself” in answer to a question on whether there were collaborative learning opportunities in China. Serena mentioned, “No group work when I was studying there”. Susan said, “Actually I don’t do group work before, always individual work”. Wayne expressed a similar observation, “In China when I study there was no group work”. As group work was not an integral part of CHC learning culture, Jacinta explained it requires time to develop understandings: “I never do group work before so it needs time to understand”. Participant comments show there was little focus on collaborative
learning in the home environment, as it may not have been valued as a valid learning experience both by students and teachers. Thus, the idea of collaborative learning is new to ISs. As a result of lack of familiarity with collaborative learning, participants were not always able to engage with this learning strategy in the host country. Participant comments indicate that collaborative learning is an unfamiliar concept, which initially posed challenges.

Participants highlighted some of the issues they faced in collaborative learning, particularly working on group projects, including communication issues and setting common goals. For example, APC participants like Abdul expressed difficulties with group work, which made him dislike it:

> Sometimes you have a group they are not working, they are lazy, they have different schedule, they are working for example. Some students are working, they can’t come to the meeting time so it’s hard to manage. It’s difficult to manage.

Habib mentioned difficulties associated with agreeing on common goals and ensuring that group members attend meetings. In his view, differing knowledge bases of students working in groups adds a further complication in creating a positive learning environment:

> [S]ometimes you get involved with a group, the studies of groups, someone from a near specialty, not in your own specialty, your specific thing. And that gives you sometimes hard time to convince that person and he will always be left in the back.

Issues such as lack of common goals, different attitudes and knowledge made collaborative learning challenging for some participants.

CHC participants also highlighted issues of communication, which complicated collaborative learning. Jacinta noted:

> Because after we work alone for quite a long time it’s really hard to communicate with other people and do what you think you can do by yourself and everybody have different minds you know. You may have totally different idea with your group mates and you may argue, which I hate. And you will feel uncomfortable if you just follow them. Sometimes … a group leader, they will allocate the work very unfair which makes you feel quite hard to finish it. It’s all communication problem I think.

Jacinta’s comments highlight communication difficulties inherent in collaborative learning, due to cultural beliefs, as CHCs are generally non-confrontational. Confrontation is uncomfortable and the path of least resistance is generally chosen. Similarly, Edna stated that she “hates” working on group projects as her experience has
shown that despite looming deadlines, group members refuse to commence work which places a lot of pressure on her to complete the set tasks. Alice noted, “Australians, they’re totally different. Like for example they got a [phone] call, they just move away, we just wait”. Alice’s example shows the view that some group members are inconsiderate and emphasises the lack of cohesion, which can be present in some collaborative learning settings. Alice also explained the “embarrassment” she encountered when working on group projects as her group members did not consider her work good enough and changed it:

You know group work, sometimes I work with Australian or like Indonesian or Malaysia or Singapore [students]. They speak so fast, they just ignore you. They do their job and if I finish my job and say they need to check first and they change your grammar. It’s a shame. I’m embarrassed in that.

Alice’s comments identify a significant issue faced by ISs who are often judged as incompetent due to EL issues posing complications in collaborative learning settings.

Participants’ lack of experience with collaborative learning was impeded by cultural and linguistic difficulties, which positioned them to accept unfair work allocations. Wayne said, “Sometimes some group mates they just didn’t work … that’s why I’m sad”. Participant responses reinforce challenges associated with working in groups, which requires the setting of common goals and the ability to work collaboratively with effective communication. Harry mentioned the difficulties associated with organising meeting times: “It’s a bit harder in uni[versity] because not all of us are doing the same course, not all of us are doing the same units and not all of us have the same time allotment. So it’s definitely a bit harder to get together and start to do things”. Harry’s comments highlight that lack of group cohesion hinders the effective working of groups.

Both APC and CHC participants’ comments show the challenges they initially encountered with collaborative learning. By the accounts of participants, collaborative learning appears to be unfamiliar to ISs, substantial new knowledge and skill development is required for them to effectively use this learning strategy.

**Independent Learning**

Another challenge faced by participants was adapting to independent learning. Sub-Proposition 1.2 explained participants’ perceptions of teachers in the host culture as egalitarian, knowledge facilitators. Therefore, it was incumbent on participants to
become independent knowledge discoverers, which they found challenging. One of the difficulties for participants in developing independent learning behaviours was recognising and accepting sources of classroom knowledge and valuing personal discovery of knowledge. Independent work in the context of research students was also challenging.

Accepting various sources of knowledge was challenging for APC participants. For example, Minah explained her dissatisfaction with learning experiences in the host culture which did not meet with her expectation of gaining knowledge: “I think some lecturers have not enough information about general topic and information knowledge … not so much content”. Habib stated, “Just teach me”. Parvez explained, previously he only had to “learn, read the information and memorise it” as given by the teacher. Eliza’s comments highlight her lack of experience and knowledge on sourcing appropriate information, which made independent learning challenging. While she seems prepared to engage in critique, she is unaware of how to conduct the literature search and required guidelines and assistance. The researcher attempted to summarise the views expressed by Eliza as shown in the following extract:

Researcher So you think because there are no guidelines here it’s too open and you don’t know when to stop? Whereas in Iran it’s very fixed, this is what you must do, this is how you must do it and this is how you present it?

Eliza Just do it.

Researcher Whereas here it’s like you go and do and see what you can find out, and tell me what you can find out, so the openness is a bit difficult?

Eliza It makes me nervous.

Iranian students are used to an education system that has clear parameters and strict guidelines. Eliza’s comments show her difficulties in adjusting to an open, flexible, unscaffolded academic environment. APC participants’ responses explain the challenges they faced in understanding that teachers are only one source of information.

Accepting diverse sources of information involves participant involvement. However, CHC participants explained their cultural disinclination to participate and their perception of teachers’ expectation that students contribute to classroom discussions was unprofessional. Serena explained the challenges for herself: “Asian cultural people [are] shy, not really sociable in the public. At the beginning I feel struggling because
sometimes if you’re quiet your tutors will come and ask you”. Serena’s discomfort was in speaking up in classroom situations and implies subtle coercion as tutors approach those who do not make contributions to classroom discussions. Wayne explained his perception, “Some of the teachers I met they’re just quite relaxed you know, they didn’t perform like very professional”. Wayne seems to believe that informal teaching approaches and the expectation that students obtain information for themselves through their peers is unprofessional. Independent thought and the ability to contribute to group discussions are important aspects of the Australian classroom environment. CHC participants’ comments highlight their difficulties with active participation, implying their lack of ability with the expected academic behaviours and unwillingness to participate.

APC participants highlighted challenges with valuing personal discovery of information. Abdul described the Australian academic environment as “teaching you how to learn, how to educate yourself” and “here I think students try to depend on yourself” as “they are given the hints, the outline and you”. Abdul’s comments indicate the need to develop independent learning behaviours, which constitutes a significant change from his prior learning experiences. Parvez said in the host environment there are many different sources of information which made learning challenging: “It’s a problem because here have Internet, you have books, you have library, you have everything”. Eliza explained, “The weak point is that they encourage me to go and find but from where, from what? I spend lots of time. I waste my time to find that”. Based on Eliza’s comments it seems her preference is to be told what to do by teachers which would provide her with clearer guidelines. The open method of instruction is frustrating for her as she not only had to discover information for herself but also source the relevant articles, another aspect of independent study. Her comments provide an insight into the learning challenges faced by students’ in the Australian classroom environment:

I think if they give me the material, I will learn them very soon. I will not waste the time to finding the material; finding the material is my problem. If they gave me the article and say to me, ‘Okay, just go critique it and give us a few words’…I will do that. But if a lecturer says me that go and find some article I have no idea.

As APC participants initially had difficulty accepting different sources of information, they did not value self-discovery of knowledge.
Similarly, CHC participants articulated their frustrations with personal discovery of knowledge. For example, Sabrina expressed frustration at the “waste of time” in conducting personal research. Edna also said she would prefer to be provided with information rather than engage in self-discovery of knowledge which she found frustrating. Participants’ comments indicate ISs difficulty in adjusting to the host teaching and learning environment, as their prior experiences led to the implicit expectation that teachers in Australia should be providing knowledge rather than guiding students through the process of learning in order to discover information for themselves.

Research Students

The dichotomy of independent/dependent learning behaviours has wide-reaching implications in the context of PhD research students based on participant accounts. This is explained by Sabrina, Asmah, Minah and Habib. These students had previously done a Masters by Research in their home countries and had some research experience. Their comments provide a contrast between their experiences as research students in both the home and host cultures.

One of the chief issues faced by PhD participants was the lack of guidance provided by Australian supervisors who expected PhD students to assume complete ownership of their research topic in addition to having good problem-solving skills. According to Habib, Iraqi supervisors have strong personal ownership of their student’s research topic as they consider “the topic like their own, [and] he will defend it logically and emotionally”. He explained his difficulty with working independently in Australia as the supervisor said, “It’s your problem, it’s your thesis, you have to solve your own problems”. Habib said he preferred a supervisor who “pushes” him, as his previous learning experiences did not make him an independent learner:

> I need somebody to push me, not to make me relax. This is different. My attitude will not be like any other local student when they want to have the lead in their hand with doing their own projects. It's different because they are more independent, they teach them how to be independent from primary school and they will be, like they are solid person while I need some support.

Similarly, Sabrina expressed frustration at the need to be independent for the completion of her research project. She stated,
If I don’t help myself, who is going to help me? Even if you have good supervisor, supervisor just try to push you. That’s it. But even if someone push you and you don’t push yourself, you die. I must depend on myself.

Sabrina is unable to depend on her supervisor to provide her with the necessary knowledge, “Because my supervisor don’t know anything about my study because he is specific for [another content area]”, quite unlike her research experiences in her home country. Accepting responsibility for their thesis and engaging in independent learning was frustrating for PhD participants.

Some PhD participants contrasted supervisor/PhD student relationships between their home countries and Australia providing insights into the challenges they faced as research students. For example, Asmah identified the dependent student-supervisory relationship in Iraq in contrast to Australia:

In my country I always depend on my supervisor. Always supervisor gives us the material and the students in everything depends on the supervisor. But here I think it’s different because supervisor just give some idea. You should depend on myself to find, to search.

The following extract explains Asmah’s view on having to be an independent research student:

It’s okay when I become independent but we face the problems because I came from different culture and different methods in learning and in teaching so I face some problems with that…I mean in PhD because [in Masters degree in Iraq] I was depending on my supervisor, always she was show me the way. I wasn’t independent, I was always depend on my supervisor but here I have to be independent. I face some problems first time… If I face a problem in my thesis and I couldn’t solve this problem my supervisor told me which solution is better but here for example when I did the methodology with my supervisor she told me always you should think about this problem, how can solve these problems. She didn’t tell me what’s the solution, I should always find another teacher and another students from PhD to help me.

Similarly, Minah expressed her frustrations as she said “Here how I adjust? I struggle.” She explained she had to assume full responsibility for her work quite unlike her research experience in Iraq where the supervisor not only accepted responsibility but also provided all the necessary information for the students to proceed successfully with their research including theoretical knowledge. According to Minah:

[S]upervisor has to get a part of responsibility and tell the student this is my responsibility to guide you to finish your proposal, to finish your PhD, to be success, not only your PhD, this is responsibility, you have to get more information … I need help…You feel like a child…Yes, even you are big [powerful] and you have information and you want to be dependent on yourself but not easy if supervisor don’t help.
As indicated in this section, participants’ prior learning experiences predispose them to be dependent on their supervisors. Developing independent learning habits involving accepting sole ownership of their research and engaging in problem-solving in regards to their thesis was identified as being challenging for PhD participants.

**Summary of Sub-Proposition 2.1**

APC and CHC participant responses highlight the key challenges they faced in the Australian academic environment. Participants’ lack of familiarity with collaborative learning was challenging. Consequently, participants had some difficulty adjusting to a different learning approach compounded by communication issues inherent in collaborative learning situations. Participants experienced challenges with accepting various sources of knowledge and valuing self-discovery of information. In the context of research students, the issue of independent learning and accepting responsibility for their thesis was perceived to be challenging.

**Sub-Proposition 2.2: EL Proficiency Issues**

ISs experience difficulties due to a lack of understanding of Australian academic and sociocultural norms, including expectations of academic staff in the host culture, aggravated by a lack of EL proficiency.

Challenges posed by a lack of EL competence were one of the issues identified by participants in adjusting to the Australian classroom environment. In order to study in Australia, ISs have to satisfy EL requirements, as detailed in Chapter Three. This is usually achieved by obtaining an overall IELTS score of 6.5 which is believed to provide the appropriate EL entry for ISs. However, this proficiency requirement does not necessarily provide students with adequate language competence to keep up with the highly colloquial aspects of Australian English. Participants faced significant cultural and linguistic barriers which complicated successful navigation of the new learning environment. While most participants viewed group work as ultimately beneficial because it allowed for information sharing and peer learning, all of them cited EL difficulties as being an impediment to understanding. Participants identified four EL challenges: keeping up with conversations and rapid rate of speech, speaking in groups, the use of colloquialisms, and EL required for professional placements.

Lack of EL competence in the academic environment can have adverse consequences for the learning of students, especially if participating in a dialogical classroom
environment where discussions progress rapidly. Despite achieving the requisite IELTS scores, Eliza was surprised by her inability to articulate herself verbally in group settings. Her frustration is evident as she feels “bad” in attempting to communicate but is unable to find the right language: “In class when everything related to the social I just feel so bad”. Eliza’s comments indicate a hesitance to speak for fear of embarrassment. While Eliza is confident in ‘professional’ knowledge, she is unable to transfer the same level of confidence to the social setting of the classroom. Her perceived lack of ability and confidence in EL hinders her ability to function effectively in group settings. Similarly, Akbar expressed his frustration at his lack of language competence, finding participating in group and class discussions “very difficult”. The notion of teamwork was not unfamiliar to Akbar, as he had previously run a successful business for 10 years, which involved developing a collaborative work environment. His issue with group work, both within and outside of class, revolved almost entirely around EL impediments. He stated, “It’s stressful, not because of group work, because of language; I like teamwork”. Participant comments indicate that issues of EL competence complicate collaborative learning, highlighted earlier as a challenge in itself.

Participants’ comments highlight the difference between their ability and confidence to speak in small group and large group settings. Abdul explained the inhibitions he faced due to EL impediments:

Sometimes I can’t understand what are they talking about. Most of students talking slang … very fast … which I can’t understand, I don’t pick up … some of them can’t understand me when I talk … I try to explain as much as I can.

Abdul’s lack of familiarity with colloquialisms (“slang”) used by Australian students led to a loss of confidence, but he persevered and attempted to make himself understood by explaining as much as he could. Having a retiring, introverted personality, Akbar chose not to participate in group discussions due to EL impediments: “One reason I don’t talk is because of English”. In this example, learning is negatively impacted by lack of EL competence.

CHC participants also explained the challenges they faced in contributing to large group discussions due to EL issues. For example, Susan was confident in small group discussions, but her lack of EL competence made it difficult for her to contribute to large group discussions. Susan noted, “The other classmates, they run [talk] so fast” and “they answer and continue to discuss”. Wayne commented:
Sometimes I try to answer and question but just interrupt during the answering I mean maybe I would feel nervous. Sometimes maybe I can talk quite well but other time it’s just getting the words. So it depends on our classmates and teachers. If they patient that would be great.

Similarly, Serena explained, “I still feel that I'm not really fully confident, maybe because of my language. I notice my other classmates they’re really active, they ask questions when they want. But I feel like it’s not really my thing, I don’t want to disturb the discussion or maybe I just lack of the confidence”. Serena further explained her discomfort in large groups: “Yes, more conscious of other people judge me and criticising. Probably this is little cultural things”. Alice mentioned that she would “feel quite embarrassed” and did not participate actively in group discussions as she perceived other students as “speak[ing] English very quickly and not respect [her] … because my [poor] English”. Lack of EL competence is a significant challenge which impeded learning, highlighting that it was difficult for participants to keep up with class discussions. Processing of information in another language takes longer for most non-native speakers of English. The cognitive processes involved in thinking in a different language are challenging for ISs. By the time ISs have framed appropriate responses, the discussion has moved on and they have lost the discussion thread. Participants’ description of the process as “scary” and making them nervous emphasises the stresses they experience when expected to contribute to large group discussions.

The rapid speech rate of local Australians aggravated the issue of lack of EL competence. Alice said, “They [Australian students] speak so fast, they just ignore you”. Jacinta explained she is unable to comprehend local students as “they speak quite fast and I can’t understand what they're talking about”. Similarly Wayne said, “still they [local students] will speak very fast”. Miriam described the challenges of her clinical placement, as she was unable to keep up due to the rapid speech rate of local students:

There are a large group of Australians so they are more professional … their English is harder and they speak very fast. And you have to concentrate … this is the most difficulty.

Similarly, Asmah mentioned “the native speakers sometimes speak quickly” and she is unable to “catch everything”. To address this issue, she requested students to repeat themselves. Participants found themselves placed in challenging situations due to rapid speech rates and the colloquial nature of Australian speech.

Fieldwork placements, such as clinical placements where students are exposed to spontaneous Australian speech, were stressful for participants due to lack of EL
Participants lacked confidence and had fears of saying the “wrong” thing which could cause embarrassment or judgement. Miriam found herself lacking in confidence while on clinical placement despite being reasonably confident in the EL and tertiary classroom. She explained the stresses while on clinical placement by comparing her EL learning experiences to clinical placements: “In English course, we know he wanna learn English and he is facing difficulty so we are not gonna judge him”. In contrast, being “In front of Australian people in placement, you think if you are gonna do this mistake, gonna think about are they going to judge me”. Miriam distinguished between the learning environment of an EL course, where there is common understanding between students as they are all ISs, and that of clinical placements which also included local students. Due to a more empathetic learning environment in the EL classroom, there was less fear of judgement as all the students were in a similar situation.

Participants noted that in a classroom with native EL speakers, the fear of judgment is strong and lack of EL proficiency causes stress. Miriam identified problems faced by ISs as resulting from lack of EL competence which can compromise their learning. This is complicated in the professional setting as there is greater anxiety caused by a fear of using incorrect terminology. Fear appears to have prevented Miriam from saying anything at all during clinical placements. This was also apparent in Akbar’s comments as he strongly expressed his discomfort in speaking to local students who he felt would make “fun” of him. Local students are perceived as EL experts, highlighting the position of ISs as belonging to the ‘Others’ group and thus not as easily accepted and more often judged. Fear of embarrassment due to EL issues impacted on participants’ learning experiences.

The interrelationship between EL proficiency, thought and comprehension as being stressful in communication is apparent in participants’ comments. For example, Habib explained, “You’re doing your studies in a second language, sometimes even if you had the knowledge and you read it in a different language, the terms it’s not easy to understand”. He added, “Our problem in the second language is not how to learn the grammar of the language but how to know that people from other side how to think”. Similarly, Minah explained, “Thinking [is] different”. Minah was referring to the differences in thinking styles, as Western thinking tends to be deductive while thinking in APCs is more inductive. Participants’ comments highlight that language issues can
cause further complications in learning for ISs who need to adjust to a different way of thinking.

**Summary of Sub-Proposition 2.2**

Sub-Proposition 2.2 has provided insights into the EL issues faced by participants, which aggravated the challenges they faced. EL issues were significant as they affected participants’ ability to keep up with the dialogical nature of Australian classrooms. Participants were restricted by lack of EL competence, as they were not always able to engage and actively participate in classroom groups. The use of colloquialisms and rapid speech rate impeded participants understanding and participation. EL issues were significant in the context of professional placements based on participants’ versions of reality.

**Summary and Discussion of Proposition 2**

As shown by APC and CHC participants’ comments, learning behaviours are influenced by the teaching context. Proposition 2 explained some key challenges faced by participants in the Australian academic environment. These challenges include learning how to work collaboratively, developing independent learning and issues related to EL proficiency. The challenges identified in the current study are substantiated in previous research which explains the academic challenges confronting ISs (Dagher & BouJaode, 2011; Goode, 2007; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Son & Park, 2014; Park & Son, 2011). Essentially, participants can be seen as experiencing two interrelated challenges: lack of awareness of Australian academic cultural norms and lack of EL proficiency. Andrade argues that, “Language problems may actually be culturally based ways of seeing the world” and highlighted the twin challenges facing ISs as lack of cultural and EL knowledge (2006, p. 143). Understanding the academic culture is important as ISs’ ability to perform well is influenced not just by EL proficiency but also an understanding of the educational culture which affects academic performance (Ingram, 2005; Son & Park, 2014).

A key challenge identified by participants was related to collaborative learning which demonstrates participants’ lack of awareness of Australian academic culture. Participants experienced difficulties with collaborative learning both from the perspective of lack of understanding about the academic culture and issues of EL proficiency. Goode argues that ISs have to learn the “rules of the game” (2007, p. 597)
in order to function effectively in a new academic environment. Kim’s (2005) study found that leading and participating in classroom discussions were some of the most challenging tasks for ISs as they were unfamiliar with collaborative learning. Participants’ lacked familiarity with collaborative learning as the classroom culture of their home environments valued individual learning with a focus on written work. There was little need for classroom participation, which in itself is a foreign notion. As such, ISs would have developed a previous preference for written communication as opposed to speaking out in class (Li, 2002; Pennycook, 2005; Volet, 1999). Participants’ lack of experience and awareness of the new rules, with an emphasis on collaborative learning, may have played a significant role in limiting their classroom participation.

Participating in classroom discussion also requires an element of critical thinking which ISs are not familiar with, aggravated by a fear of humiliation and negative judgment (Cho et al., 2008) compounded by EL proficiency issues. ISs admit their language weakness and are sensitive to their ability (Robertson et. al., 2000). Participants’ comments show hesitation to participate in classroom discussions due to fear of embarrassment and making mistakes (Jacob & Greggo, 2001). Cho et. al., (2008, p. 204) provide the view of one of their Chinese participants who explains the class discussions made him realise “The professor is more like a coordinator (original italics) instead of just like the final judge”. Teaching methodologies are different between the home and host culture, necessitating a change in attitude, as also shown in the findings of the current study. Sawir (2005) argues that pedagogical strategies which emphasise conversational EL and classroom participation may disadvantage ISs who have been passive classroom learners where reading skills were emphasised at the expense of conversational skills. This may explain why ISs prefer to work alone and dislike group work or prefer to work with students from similar cultures or language backgrounds where they can converse in their native languages (Sawir, 2005).

The challenge for ISs is their lack of knowledge on how to comply with the cultural and educational requirements of their host institutions (Son & Park, 2014). They have to develop different learning styles (Novera, 2004; Ramburuth & McCormick, 2001) and move from teacher-centred to student-centred learning and recognise that knowledge can be derived from a variety of sources and through personal discoveries (Son & Park, 2014). Learning is not compromised through personal knowledge discovery; however, participants’ perceive their learning to be adversely affected by the lack of immediate
access to information. The source of knowledge is different and there is some resistance in accepting responsibility for personal learning. This is not a deliberate conscious decision but indicates that the process of adjusting to a new culture is unique to different individuals. The findings from the current study show that participants have considerable difficulty adjusting to the new academic environment which values personal knowledge discovery.

Participants recognised the need to develop independent learning behaviours. Participants’ dependence on the teacher in the home environment is challenged in the Australian learning environment, which encourages independent learning behaviours, constituting a “burden for the students to adapt to a critical learning process” (Son & Park, 2014, p. 33). As ISs recognise the differences between dependent and independent learning, Goode (2007, p. 597) argues that it is important to view ISs as “highly agentic individuals” who are attempting to understand these rules, rather than interpret dependent learning as a deficit. Participants’ limited success in suspending previous learning expectations and aligning themselves with the current learning environment can be viewed in this context. ISs have to learn the new “rules of the game” (Goode, 2007, p. 597) in the Australian academic and supervisory environment. The use of scaffolding in the Australian classroom could assist students from predominantly dependent learning cultures better understand Western academic rules.

Developing independent learning behaviours was particularly challenging for research participants in the current study. Participants’ comments indicated difficulty in assuming sole responsibility for their projects, facilitated and guided by their supervisors. This has been well documented in other studies (for e.g Adrian-Taylor et al., 2007; Channel, 1990; Sidhu, Kaur, Fook & Yunus, 2014; Spencer-Oatey, 1997; Wang & Li, 2011). Research ISs from Asian/Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds tend to have different interpretations of the supervisory relationship where students and supervisors are close (Ballard & Clanchy, 1997; Biggs, 2003; Elsey, 1990). Research participants expected to be told what to do by the “the central figure” (Charles & Stewart, 1991, p. 174). These students come from cultures where they were taught to “replicate esteemed authorities’ work, rather than analyse or critique it” (Adrian-Taylor et al., 2007, p. 93). As identified by participants’ comments in the current study, sources of conflict in the supervisory relationship include a mismatch in expectations and issues of responsibility. These findings are consistent
with others, which concluded that sources of conflict in supervisory relationships included lack of openness and different expectations regarding responsibilities (Adrian-Taylor et al., 2007).

Participants’ responses indicated a lack of understanding of the supervisory process in Australia (Kandiko & Kinchin, 2012). They expected the supervisory relationship to be close where their supervisor will assume ownership of the project. Their expectation was for the supervisor to “tell us what we need to do, [and] we’ll do it” (Ottenwill & Macfarlane, 2003, p. 34). Participants were reluctant to communicate openly with their supervisors and explained their frustrations about the lack of guidance and having to assume sole responsibility for their thesis as they were used to the apprentice-master model based on their experiences in the home cultures (Wang & Li, 2011). McClure’s study (2005), which concluded that research students felt unprepared to undertake independent research, is substantiated by participant comments in this study. Supervisory relationships are a major cause of anxiety for research ISs who need to adapt to new forms and styles of supervisory relationships. A further source of anxiety is the lack of preparedness to undertake independent research and communicate learning needs to supervisors (McClure, 2005).

Participants’ comments highlighted their lack of awareness of the host educational culture which impeded genuine classroom participation, aggravated by a lack of EL proficiency. These participants framed their expectations of teacher/student interactions and supervisory relationships in the host culture by using their prior learning experiences as a benchmark. This is challenging as teaching/learning relationships are rooted in contrasting educational philosophies between the home and host cultures (Wang & Li, 2011). The relatively higher power distance dimension of APCs and CHCs (Hofstede, 2001), where hierarchical relationships are the norm, can be used to explain participants’ difficulty with forming different relationships in the host culture. Developing appropriate learning behaviours was found to be challenging for ISs, both in the context of teacher/student classroom interactions and supervisory relationships.

EL proficiency was identified as a significant challenge in the current study. Lack of EL proficiency hindered genuine classroom participation, leading participants to be silent as they were not confident in their ability to express themselves clearly and fluently. This has been found in other studies (Hellstén 2002; Hellstén & Prescott, 2004, Huang &
Cowden, 2009, Liu & Jackson, 2008; Mulligan & Kirkpatrick, 2000; Sawir, 2005; Volet & Kee, 1993). Khawaja and Stallman’s (2011) study, which reported EL proficiency as a significant challenge, highlighted “EL deficits” (2011, p. 218) such as difficulties with understanding accents, lack of confidence which slowed speech rate, and issues with academic reading and writing. The EL issues identified by Khawaja and Stallman (2011) were similar to the EL challenges encountered by participants in the current study who explained they had difficulty understanding Australian accents and the rapid rate of speech which sometimes limited their ability to participate actively in classroom discussion. Based on the findings of the current study and as indicated by other studies, EL proficiency issues constitute a major challenge for ISs.

In Australian classroom environments, which focus on knowledge facilitation and independent learning, participants had to develop strategies to adjust to a teaching style where the teacher is a knowledge facilitator rather than a knowledge giver. Goode views this as a “re-cast[ing] of the teacher/student relationship” where the “balance of the teacher as the straightforward impartor of knowledge shifts towards being a “facilitator” providing resources conducive to learning” (2007, p. 590). The low power distance of the egalitarian Australian classroom environment necessitates the development of independent learning behaviours and the ability to work in collaborative settings which is challenging for ISs due to their prior experiences as dependent, individual learners, aggravated by lack of EL proficiency. However, participants recognised the need to adapt to the host-learning environment as academic success was paramount to them. The strategies used by participants to manage the challenges they faced in the Australian classroom environment is explained in the next proposition.

**Proposition 3 – Development of learning behaviours**

**Despite encountering challenges with some learning experiences, ISs with a strong sense of identity are able to develop independent learning behaviours as these are not static or culturally bound.**

Proposition 3 describes participants ability to adjust to the host learning environment. Pressures on participants necessitated the development of a range of coping strategies. These pressures were influential in enabling participants to overcome the challenges identified in Proposition 2 and motivated them to focus on their learning goals.
Participants had a combination of motivating influences, which enabled them to focus on academic achievement and learning goals. These influences were developed into two categories; the first category relates fear of consequences while the second focuses on positive influences. The first section presents Sub-Proposition 3.1, which discusses the main pressures and stressors that motivated participants. These include fear of losing face and financial pressures exacerbated by traumatic backgrounds, namely war. The following section presents Sub-Proposition 3.2 and describes personal strategies developed by participants in adjusting to the host environment. These include acceptance of personal responsibility, recognition of inherent benefits of collaborative learning, and participants’ intrinsic desire to attain high levels of academic achievement. Development of these personal strategies was facilitated by assessment structures and participation on an APP.

**Sub-Proposition 3.1: Pressures and Stressors**

*Internal and external pressures and stressors (e.g. financial pressures, demands of government sponsorships, family honour and pride) make it necessary for ISs to develop appropriate learning behaviours.*

The two main pressures and stressors identified by participants were fear of losing face and financial pressures exacerbated by traumatic backgrounds. Loss of face was explicitly mentioned and predominant amongst the CHC participants. Both participant cohorts experienced significant financial pressures but the sources of these differed. APC participants were stressed by the demands of government sponsorships and some were impacted by war, particularly the Iranians and the Iraqis. CHC participants’ financial stresses were due to family demands and expectations.

**Fear of Losing Face**

A common theme that emerged from CHC participants was the fear of losing face due to cultural reasons and upbringing. For example, Jacinta explained that from a young age she had been brought up to focus on academic success. She also emphasised that China is a very competitive country and there is strong parental desire for children to concentrate fully on their studies so as to bring “benefit” and “power” to the family:

> In our habit when we back in China, we study in China for 10, 20 years. We always studied in China. Our parents and our teachers always say they want us to study … And the competition in China is quite [high], the pressure is quite large so people have to study, study, study and we can get a high school can make them [our family] have more benefit or have more [power]ful.
Jacinta explained her father’s expectation was for her to pass all her units with high scores so as to bring pride and honour to herself and the family, an important aspect of CHCs. This is evident as she said:

[My father] he shouted at me. He said, ‘I don’t care what leader you are, the only thing I care is you can pass all, you can get high scoring all your units and you can make the teachers like you and you can go to a good university. That’s the only thing I care.’ And I was like, okay.

Jacinta’s comments provide insight into the cultural expectations of CHC students who have been brought up with the belief that academic success should always be their primary goal. In Jacinta’s first year in Australia, she suffered from depression and culture shock, aggravated by disillusionment by her tutor’s attitude towards her. She explained this as “the feeling of fail because I never felt I was so bad before … and that shocked me”. She went on to explain that “there was some different habit with other people”, which motivated her to change and adjust in order to “save face”. Participant comments highlight emphasis on ‘face saving’ to avoid embarrassment to themselves and their families.

Similarly, Alice addressed the notion of losing face as she explained there is no room for failure in her life. This was evident as she stated, “I cannot ever fail” as “fail is big, big hit to me. I cannot fail”. She further explained,

[B]ecause a lot of pressure in China in study, everything we’re going to get is number one, if we got a pass it’s not acceptable in family … and without control of my parents I feel a lot of responsibility on my shoulders to make them happy.

Alice’s comments highlight cultural pressures to ensure high levels of academic attainment. CHC participant comments indicate challenges encountered have to be overcome in order to ensure academic success. Participants’ reality indicates that face-saving is especially important in CHCs where there is little room or acceptance of failure.

APC participants did not explicitly refer to loss of face but this was implied in their responses, as failure to achieve academically would cause embarrassment to both themselves and their families. This was especially in relation to government sponsorships, an issue that will be explained in the next section. Additionally, in the case of two participants who were role models for their communities, the issue of face was implicit as they had to model appropriate behaviours.
Financial Pressures and Traumatic Backgrounds

Both APC and CHC participants experienced significant financial pressures that necessitated adjustment, as consequences of failure were high. The feedback obtained from APC participants emphasised severe financial repercussions on poor academic performance. The following extract indicates the financial pressures faced by Asmah, which motivated her academically:

I should continue [my studies] because if I decide to go back or to return to my country I should take about $100,000 to my government … because I have a contract with my government. So I should continue to finish my study and not return to my country.

Asmah described the situation in her country where her immediate family were in constant danger that caused her to worry incessantly about their safety. She explained the impact this had on her as she was constantly receiving bad news while on the APP. In particular, Asmah commented, “The last year was very difficult in Iraq, the situation was very difficult and always I heard bad news from [home] because I lost some relatives. My cousin was killed last year”. Asmah’s comments highlight the emotional stress she experienced in her first year of studies in Australia. Her ability to cope with such stress was due to internalised extrinsic motivation as the consequences of failure are very high, both financially and emotionally:

Researcher: So how have you been coping with all this?

Asmah: Sometimes crying is better to feel comfort. Yes, I don’t know how but I don’t like feeling. I mean, I don’t like feel in my life. I prefer to continue to get my chance to improve my life, to finish my study.

Despite these feelings, Asmah has managed, completing her candidacy application within the set time frame. She focused on the task at hand without allowing other fundamentally difficult emotional issues to interfere with her learning goals and academic achievement. Asmah showed an acceptance of her situation, and while she cried for comfort, she did not allow this to distract her from her immediate goals due to both financial and emotional reasons.

Similarly, Habib described the financial repercussions of not completing his studies in Australia successfully:

Habib: [B]ecause I had limited time for my sponsorship that give me a lot of pressure and even sometimes I can’t think clearly. One of the hugest problems is with the sponsorship
you get. The grant thing. So you have to pay back the government if you not finish or fail.

**Researcher**  So finishing your thesis is your primary aim?

**Habib**  Yes, it’s my primary goal. If I don’t have the fund … If I don’t finish and go back to my country, my father would lose his whole property … To be honest education here is very expensive … If I want to be my study in my country or in Germany it will be for free while here it’s around $100K or more. It’s not cheap, so at least I don’t want to forfeit that money.

Habib’s comments indicate the pressure to perform well to provide for his family and to avoid financial penalties. Financial implications of poor academic performance were a strong motivator for APC participants.

Minah described herself as a “result [product] of the war” which caused her to feel paranoid in her first few months in Australia. However, she found the strength to overcome emotional turmoils as best she could to focus on her PhD:

> [B]ecause I always look at all these troubles and sometimes I say to my husband, ‘No, that's enough, I don't want this Ph.D. This destroyed me. It's very difficult.’ Then he says, ‘Look at how much you stand all these difficulties and confront them and try your best, you should continue, look how people will look at you even in your family and your country, why you go there and then [return] without this [Phd].’

The pressures identified by participants indicate possible obstructions to academic success. However, their positive responses highlight coping abilities, driven by high levels of motivation and a focus on their learning goals.

A few participants discussed the political situation in their countries as motivating ‘push’ factors to ensure safety for themselves and their families. Akbar’s comments indicate his strong desire to perform well as he comes from a traumatic background in Iran. An Australian education will offer him better future prospects, as his primary goal is to live in a safe, secure environment. As he said, “Iranians we can find peace and security here”. In order to achieve this longer-term goal, Akbar needed to perform well. Both Eliza and Parvez mentioned the political situation in Iran as a contributory reason in their decision to study in Australia. APC participants explained the need to feel secure and safe as a consequence of war in their home countries.

While APC participants experienced financial stress complicated by traumatic backgrounds, CHC participants experienced financial pressures as they were dependent
on their families for financial support. Alice explained, “You know my aim is to don’t fail, you fail you waste a lot of money here … If I fail I need to ask my parents for more money”. Edna explained the financial repercussions of not performing well academically involved asking her parents for more money: “I cannot ask my parents for money to help me”. She did not consider asking her parents for financial assistance as a viable option. Financial pressures played an important role in motivating CHC participants to complete their studies.

Summary of Sub-Proposition 3.1

APC and CHC participants’ comments highlight the stressors and pressures they faced which acted as motivators to influence positive academic achievements by focusing on learning goals. Loss of face was a significant influence on CHC participants. Both participant cohorts’ experienced financial stress but the sources of these differed. APC participants were stressed by sponsorship demands, complicated by traumatic war backgrounds. In contrast, CHC participants experienced financial pressure from their families. These influences need to be recognised as significant in motivating participants to achieve academically. Sub-Proposition 3.1 has presented the main pressures and stressors faced by APC and CHC participants. Participant reality indicates that these pressures and stressors differ based on student’s personal, sociocultural and political context.

Sub-Proposition 3.2: Coping Strategies - Internalised Extrinsic Motivation

ISs develop a range of coping strategies due to internalised extrinsic motivation (acceptance of personal responsibility) and motivation (learning goals). Academic cultural preparatory courses were instrumental in bridging the gap between the home academic environment and the Australian classroom.

Sub-Proposition 3.2 explains participants’ development of a range of coping strategies in response to the demands and challenges faced in the host academic environment as identified in Proposition 2. This section has been structured around the four main coping strategies developed by both APC and CHC participants: acceptance of personal responsibility facilitated by a conducive learning environment, recognition of benefits of collaborative learning and ways of adaptation, intrinsic desire for high academic achievement and facilitation of coping strategies. These coping strategies were facilitated by the structure of assessments and the completion of an APP prior to mainstream entry.
Acceptance of Personal Responsibility

Participants were highly motivated and accepted personal responsibility for their learning, facilitated by a conducive environment. In particular, PhD participants showed changes in their attitudes, indicating that they were adjusting to the host environment and accepting responsibility for their theses. Consequences of failure are very high, as explained in the earlier section, which necessitated adjustment. The first part of this section explains APC participants’ acceptance of personal responsibility while the second part describes CHC participants. The final part of the section discusses PhD participants’ acceptance of personal responsibility.

One of the major contributory reasons leading to participants’ adaptability to the host environment was accepting responsibility for their learning, an important aspect of internalised extrinsic motivation. Chapter 3 provided the definition of internalised extrinsic motivation as “as an active and natural process in which individuals transform (or not) socially sanctioned mores or requests into personally endorsed values and self-regulation” (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 235). A conducive learning environment, which encouraged independent learning attitudes, facilitated the development of independent learning behaviours. According to Jaffar, the academic environment of the host culture, in which he felt both encouraged and appreciated, helped with his learning experiences:

[T]hey [teachers] have appreciation even when you do something big or small or just have 50% right. They have appreciation to what he [student] did even if 10%, they have appreciation. That sounds good with a smile which encourage us to do more, to think in critique, critically, thinking widely.

Jaffar explained he had to change his learning approach, which was primarily content knowledge and regurgitation of that content, to accepting responsibility for his learning. This is implicit as he said, “In my country, they just have this booklet to study and pass their exams. However, here, you know, you have to read, you have to do everything yourself”. Akbar said he engaged in web searches to obtain clarification and information on terminology explained in class as he tried to “understand what the terminology means”. Akbar’s attempts to improve his understanding illustrate his gradual acceptance that Australian teachers expect independence: “Here (Australia), I think students try to depend on yourself” which “teaches you to educate yourself, how to learn”. Akbar’s emphasis on “how” to learn is significant as the focus is on the process of learning which is fundamentally different to his prior learning experiences.
This has implications for ISs’ successful learning in Australia, as inability to adapt to an independent mode of learning would inevitably hinder progress.

APC participants commented on their need to develop an active learning style. Miriam explained she had to “forget” her previous learning behaviour in order to interact and participate actively in tutorials and discussions, an expectation of Australian teachers. She commented, “I have to interact because they actually mark us [on] how we interact and how we participate”. In her view, there is a greater expectation in the host culture for ISs to develop personal responsibility, as the teaching approach is different with students having to participate in discussion groups. Akbar also explained the numerous in-class opportunities which exist for students to improve as long as they are sufficiently motivated. He tried to make use of these opportunities despite the challenges:

[A] lot of opportunities are in class for you as well, because the more nervous you are about participating the more you’re not going to improve. This is just my advice. The more you speak up, the more you are forced to make yourself sound better, and in doing that you are actually going to get better.

Akbar’s comments indicate that ultimately the student has to accept responsibility for their learning. This includes taking advantage of various opportunities provided in the Australian classroom environment. His comments also show recognition that ISs can improve if they accept the challenge of participating in class despite their lack of confidence. Similarly, Asmah explained that she overcame her initial hesitation and shyness and began to interact more in class with the teacher and peers, exhibiting motivation to improve:

In the first six months I was very scared and especially when I was in ELICOS. I understand the teacher, everything, but I feel shy to share the idea with the teachers. Then later, I can deal with the teachers and give my opinion.

As Parvez explained, “You’re on your own, the lecturer just give you a few hints, what you must do, if you have problem come to see me, that’s your topic, you must go for it”. Parvez’s comments illustrate the facilitator role of the Australian teacher. In this context, participant comments indicate that ISs are expected to work independently and view their teachers as facilitators and guides. APC participants had to change their learning process of being dependent on the teacher to becoming independent, autonomous learners, which occurred due to high levels of motivation and learning goals. As participants were highly motivated and accepted personal responsibility, they developed more active learning styles.
CHC participants also accepted responsibility for their learning and developed independent learning behaviours despite the initial challenges. For example, Susan explained that in the host environment “teachers encourage the student, but at the same time the student must also learn themselves”. Susan recognised the need to accept responsibility for her learning with involvement and guidance from teachers. Ultimately, students have to recognise that they need to accept responsibility for their learning before they are actually able to do so. Similarly, Jacinta explained, “The Chinese system is easier and a greater degree of independence in learning is expected in Australian classrooms”. While she found this more challenging, she recognised that it provided more in-depth understanding. She further explained:

I prefer the Australia one because they make me, that really makes me understand more and remember more … But the experience, once you have some question about it and you do the research about it, you will remember it better.

Wayne explained he had to learn to communicate with the host teachers and develop a relationship due to the more interactive teaching approach:

[Y]ou’ve still got tutorial so you have questions you can ask in tutorial and student will get more opportunity to learn to practice, to communicate with their teachers during the small classes’ like tutorials and seminars and labs.

The following short extract with Serena explains her willingness to question, encouraged by the conducive learning environment:

Serena I feel like I'm willing to ask more questions. I think that that's a big sign for me.

Researcher Why were you more willing to ask questions?

Serena Because I found the lecturers, they don't mind me to ask the questions or even challenging their opinions. I feel if I ask more questions to address my questions I'd be doing better for my assignment and essays and good for my learning.

Serena’s comments indicate a willingness to adapt to the learning demands of the host environment, as she understands that this will lead to better learning outcomes. CHC participants’ feedback indicates recognition and willingness to accept responsibility for their learning.
PhD participants (Sabrina, Habib, Minah and Asmah) explained that it was very important for them to accept responsibility for their thesis. For example, Sabrina explained that she had to motivate herself:

Even if you have good supervisor, supervisor just try to push you. That’s it. But even if someone push you and you don’t push yourself, you die.

Sabrina’s explanation shows awareness of the need to accept personal responsibility for her thesis, as the consequences of not doing so may lead to failure. Minah explained that although there was some guidance, ultimately she had to accept personal responsibility:

But nowadays I feel I have full responsibility in my work ... But there is no one can share my responsibility. I feel this is my responsibility to do everything in my work.

Minah explained that she went through “twenty papers to find the answer that my supervisor say, ‘What’s this?’ He doesn’t give me the answer, so this improve my reading, improve my searching. So I have to say that it is good too”. Minah stated that had to “depend on myself, my reading, research”. She also recognised that she had to take ownership of her thesis:

Because you have to take this responsibility in your PhD, no one else can know what you’re thinking, what you want to do exactly, even in yourself, in faculty. But it depends on what I want to do in this particular topic, so it depends on myself. I have to make it clarify [clear] for what I’m doing, no one else.

Minah’s comments indicate high levels of motivation as she engaged in independent research and demonstrated an understanding that PhD research involves a topic specific to her. In her previous experience, Minah would have depended on the supervisor to provide all materials. But as she had to accept responsibility in the host environment she engaged in a literature search, showing her ability to adjust to the demands of the new academic environment as her focus was on achieving her learning goals.

PhD participants recognised that the onus was on them to adapt to the demands of the host environment. The following extract with Asmah indicates that she recognised the need to adjust her way of thinking:

Asmah

If I face a problem in my thesis and I couldn’t solve this problem, my supervisor [in Iraq] told me which solution is better. But here [in Australia] for example, when I did the methodology with my supervisor she told me always you should think about this problem, how can [you] solve these problems. She didn’t tell me what’s the solution. I should always find another teacher and another students from PhD to help me. First time [it was] frustrating, but now I think it’s okay. It’s a good idea.
**Asmah**

Because I feel more confident. Now I can know which database is good for me and where I should go to ask and who I should ask. For example, when I start to do the candidacy proposal I was very confused and I didn’t know from which point I should start and always went to my supervisor to ask when, where I should start. But after that I depended on myself, searching by computer, go to library, ask librarian. I think it’s good for me because also this is good for my language because make me more confident and remove the shyness from me. I can discuss with the people in the library [from various universities] my project. So when I went to this library I feel it’s okay because I found a lot of information and I found some people help me in this situation.

Asmah’s comments highlight that she solved her own problems. In the process of doing so, she developed self-confidence, and explored different avenues of support and information which enabled internalisation of information. This occurred as she recognised and accepted personal responsibility. Habib expressed a similar view:

The real big thing is not the Australian came to my country to have the knowledge or education. I came to Australia, so I had to modify myself to that atmosphere. I am their invention.

Habib’s comment that it is the personal responsibility of ISs to adapt to the host environment for successful learning embodies the intrinsic externalised motivation of many ISs: “This is your thesis, you are 100% responsible about your thesis”.

Participant acceptance of responsibility occurred over time with the recognition that adjustment was necessary to prevent ultimate failure.

The role of motivation and the focus on learning goals in enabling academic adjustment and adaptation is significant. Both APC and CHC participants’ high levels of motivation led to acceptance of personal responsibility for their own learning and PhD thesis. The conducive learning environment in Australian classrooms, openness and acceptance of different ways of thinking, and a recognition of the consequences of not accepting responsibility facilitated participants’ acceptance of personal responsibility for their learning.

**Recognition of Inherent Benefits of Collaborative Learning**

As highlighted in Proposition 2, participants found collaborative learning challenging. However, their high levels of motivation enabled them to confront those challenges to show recognition of the inherent benefits of working in groups. These include sharing...
of strengths and learning from peers which stimulated thinking, allowing participants to develop different perspectives despite initial difficulties.

Despite the challenges associated with collaborative learning, participant comments indicate gradual acceptance of collaborative learning as a valid and useful teaching and learning strategy. For example, APC participants recognised the inherent benefits of collaborative learning. Asmah noted that group work has advantages “because when I study in a group work I can benefit from other students and we can solve problems together, maybe another student has a good idea that I can get from him”. Miriam’s responses indicate a similar way of thinking as she believed that group work enables individuals to “strengthen and gain knowledge” through discussions which allow for the expression of different viewpoints. Jaffar’s views highlight the mutual benefits of collaborative learning:

Group work in this one I feel there’s just an experiment phase, do the troubleshooting. If he’s good in theory, I’m good in practical, so I can troubleshoot the practical side and he can help me with the clinical side or whatever of scientific side. So develop those both skills in mutual way and the people who have been through it. I’m good at technical, good also at scientific but not as [good as] technical, very good in technical. I can troubleshoot very quickly so my guy because he’s an Indian pathologist around fifty years old, so he has a lot of experience, especially knowledge because he was teaching university in India. So we used to help each other until we passed these units.

Jaffar’s comments indicate that students can depend on each other and work to their strengths in collaborative settings as it allows for “specialisation of labour”. Minah explained that collaborative learning leads to the development of different perspectives and ideas, “Group work is really helpful because you have contact to other people and get ideas from different people. You can collect the idea and you can find your mistake and change”. Similarly, Miriam stated that group work is preferable to working individually as it leads to new knowledge:

[R]eally, group work is much better than to work alone although you might feel shy sometimes with new people. But it strengths [strengthens] your knowledge because you gain their knowledge and you can add to your knowledge more.

APC participants’ comments indicate their gradual adaptability to collaborative learning with the recognition that it leads to efficient ways of working and the development of ideas and knowledge.
Similarly CHC students explained the advantages of collaborative learning. Jacinta noted:

The group work I should say is quite difficult at the first time. But it will also increase your efficiency. It has a kind of spirit because if you can’t work with other people in some work you cannot finish it. At first it will take some time for people to adjust.

Jacinta’s comments show that adapting to collaborative learning occurs gradually, as she developed confidence with the process. This confidence is reflected in the following quote:

At first I just follow what other people say even though they have different idea with me. I just tell them in another way, try to not so directly. But since I have some experience I say what I think. And after I have some experience, the group work getting easier, much easier.

Harry explained that collaborative learning leads to cooperative learning:

Good things about group work is that we share what we want to do and we actually have the ability to do things that we can’t do when we’re by ourselves. For example, I’m not that good with arts so I would like my project to look very beautiful. I am not capable of doing it and so if someone in my group have the ability of beautifying the thing, yeah.

Harry observed that working in groups allows for different individuals to make different contributions which can lead to success for the entire group. Harry’s observation shows one of the major advantages of collaborative learning. Alice was initially uncomfortable with group work but adapted to it gradually:

[F]irst time is hard to get a good relationship with others and then okay, it’s cool. We got a meeting in the library, and we talk and sometimes we discuss some study. It’s not too bad and then, step by step … It’s okay.

Alice also believes collaborative learning assists with learning experiences:

Different people got different ideas. We put idea together and we discuss and sometimes my idea is totally not related to that topic and some students give me some their personal ideas. It’s good … I can actually improve a lot.

Similarly, Wayne showed recognition of the benefits of collaborative learning, which he differentiated from individual learning:

For example, if you have presentation or you have to write an assignment report it’s better to have group work because you’ve got different opinions from others. You learn from others. But if you prepare for an exam or, I mean, do some readings, when you do the readings it’s better to learn alone because you need to learn quite efficiently because at that times someone’s opinion may interrupt you.

Serena also commented how she had grown to like collaborative learning: “I quite like it I find. I feel like that's more beneficial for the students and for everyone in the
workplace because we learn from each other”. Participants’ adaptability to collaborative learning was significantly influenced by their recognition of its inherent benefits.

Working with Australian students was an issue for participants because of EL proficiency and cultural issues. However, as participants realised the importance of collaborative learning, they developed strategies which enabled successful navigation of the changed learning environment. One strategy employed by a few of the participants was to work with other ISs who are bilingual. Alice explained that she derived greater benefit from group work when she worked with other ISs, particularly Singaporeans, as they are bilingual speakers:

Alice  I really like them … they are bilingual. They can speak Chinese fluently and English fluently. They will tell you first sentence, ‘Is it okay if I speak English?’ I say, ‘Okay, Can I speak Chinese?’ With them in the beginning they say, …’What do you think, you want to talk with me in Chinese?’ Malaysian [students] as well.

Researcher  Okay, so you like people who can speak Chinese as well as English because you feel more comfortable?

Alice  Yes, if we go to a meeting I say, ‘I don’t got it, can you explain in Chinese?’ Yes, they can do it, so it’s not bad. I can understand it easily and quickly.

According to Alice, working with bilingual speakers like Singaporeans and Malaysians provided a higher degree of comfort as she could transition from speaking in Chinese to English with little difficulty. Alice felt less embarrassed and had little fear of being judged as she perceived she was in a safer environment.

Similarly, Wayne said, “I work with ISs. The good thing is that you may have the same cultural background. That will help you to know the person’s background”. Similarity of cultural backgrounds is one way of ensuring positive outcomes in the group work situation. Wayne’s assumption is that all ISs are a culturally homogenous entity. However, the similarity may not be so much in relation to individual cultural beliefs but commonality in goals and ambitions. This would necessarily influence the need to work cohesively in order to achieve high marks, an ultimate goal of ISs. Wayne emphasised that the strategies required of individuals in group work settings cannot be learned from a textbook but involves the learning of life skills:

I think it really depends on the person in the group. It’s something about luck sometimes. But, I mean, you need to try to push your group mates.
So if everybody works that will be great, but if someone didn’t work so I think you need some skills that isn’t written on the textbook.

Wayne’s responses highlight that he has understood and accepted the benefits of working in groups. He explained that when issues arise in group projects, he does not give up but rather takes time to work with difficult group members:

Like maybe you need to take more job than him and show him you have done more than him and now it’s your time to, you know, and always try to communicate with people. If someone didn’t work, don’t just give up [on] him or her. You need to take care of them to find out why they didn’t work. Maybe they have their private reasons. Not everybody just lazy, I don’t believe that.

Wayne’s comments show that adjusting to collaborative learning is an important skill, not just for successful learning but also for broader life-skills.

Both APC and CHC participant comments indicate recognition of the wider and immediate benefits of collaborative learning, which enabled them to utilise a range of adjustment strategies for successful learning.

**Intrinsic Desire to Attain High Levels of Academic Achievement**

Due to a strong personal desire to perform well academically, most ISs eventually adjust to the host culture. ISs personality and their internalised extrinsic desire to attain high levels of academic achievement play an influential role. Intrinsic desire to perform well was also shown in participant determination and the proactive steps they took, including asking for assistance and learning from feedback from a variety of sources. Participants also developed a range of individual strategies to improve EL skills.

APC participants were determined to overcome obstacles in order to adjust to the demands of the host learning environment. For example, Miriam “force[d]” herself to adjust to the new academic environment: “It’s something inside you because you wait from the beginning facing all those things. You have to work with it and just to forget about it”. She made herself “forget” her cultural inhibitions so that she could operate more successfully in the new academic environment, indicating high levels of motivation. Similarly, high levels of achievement and the desire to perform well are reflected in Eliza’s comments. In addition to studying at university, Eliza was also preparing for other proficiency tests for registration as a medical doctor. Her ability was evident from her semester weighted average of 78.7%. This was due to her desire to continuously improve herself and the development of personal strategies, including
seeking help from those around her. However, Eliza’s situation is a little different to that of Miriam’s as Eliza was a direct entrant into the Biomedicine course. Not having completed an APP like her peers, Eliza was anxious and felt she was lagging behind: “Myself had a problem because I thought everyone had bridging course and all of them are better than me, I was not confident”. Despite these obstacles, Eliza was highly motivated to perform well as she edited one presentation “seven times”, including new and better references as she found them: “There is newer references, these are better so I change again”. This high level of motivation is important as it indicates determination to do well.

As shown earlier, the traumatic backgrounds of some participants can be a significant obstacle to academic achievement, but their determination enabled them to progress with their studies. This is shown in Asmah’s comment indicating the pressures she faced were frustrating at times, but she persevered through determination and family support:

I prefer to continue to get my chance to get my improve my life, to finish my study. Yes, because my son and my husband also suffer with me when I study. Sometimes I am very angry and my husband always deal with me. I feel my husband always support me to calm down.

Asmah further explained that she made consistent efforts to improve her EL skills, as the PhD thesis requires high levels of EL proficiency:

I want to improve my English because … I feel I’m not very good. I just feel maybe in the middle level but I need to improve more … especially, you know, PhD means high ability in English.

Asmah’s motivation to improve her EL skills was to ensure success on her PhD. Similarly, Minah, who experienced a few issues with her candidacy, persevered: “It’s because I never fail before. I always pass successfully before. Here, I feel like fail … I resisted, I tried to [do] my best … I insist [to] myself I want to continue my journey”. These APC participants’ comments highlight that a major role in their adjustment is their determination and will to succeed as they are focused on achieving learning goals.

Determination to succeed was also apparent in comments made by some CHC participants. For example, Edna’s determination to succeed meant she focussed all her energies on studying: “I just need to do well, that’s all. I just focus on my study, my life is boring. Only two points in my life – home and uni”. Participants also recognised their disadvantaged position as second language learners. Sabrina described this:
For international students they have to work hard more than locals ’cos they don’t use English language, not their first language. That is why you have to work more, work double, ’cos you have to read many times and only one sentence again and again … one sentence to understand very clearly about that.

As the process of understanding is more time-consuming, the cognitive effort required of ISs is considerable. It is through determination and motivation that ISs are able to transcend learning barriers.

A few participants derived motivation from their status in their ethnic communities. For example, Jaffar’s motivation was derived from being a student leader in his community. Jaffar explained that numerous KSA families visited him regularly as he was perceived as a student leader: “I’m like a leader for the Saudi students’ club”. In this role he is frequently contacted by email, home phone and through his Saudi mobile number for guidance from KSA students. He also showed an intrinsic desire to perform well as indicated by his learning attitudes and voluntary participation in the APP. Similarly, Parvez formed the Persian Students Club, “I start to create a community in here, it’s called Persians In [Australian State name]”. The social group was formed to assist new Iranian arrivals to transition to a new culture. Being in this position, Parvez had to role model positive learning behaviours for new student entrants from Iran. Through being role models, some participants were motivated to continue good academic performance.

**Self-improvement strategies utilised**

Based on internalised extrinsic motivation, APC and CHC participants described developing a range of self-improvement strategies, particularly to improve on EL skills. These related to extensive listening activities, writing extension activities, and obtaining assistance from different sources.

**Listening**

Most of the APC and CHC participants utilised the mass media as a way of practising their listening skills, ranging from listening to news items on the television and radio, to watching Australian drama on television. Through additional listening activities, participants aimed to improve their listening comprehension skills and become more familiar with different accents, in addition to improving their speaking skills. Practising
listening skills outside of the classroom context is not onerous and can be done simultaneously with other activities.

Seven of the nine APC participants and six of the eight CHC participants mentioned they had utilised listening activities. Eliza mentioned that she often listened to the radio while performing household chores: “I used TV at home. When I’m working or doing housework, I turn on the TV and increase the sound so I can hear”. Miriam chose to “hear radio, watch TV, those things ... individual learning that might help a lot”. Asmah dedicated “one hour to listening, for example BBC… and watching TV, Australian TV, to improve my listening”. Akbar mentioned that he had a strong desire to perform well but was limited due to EL issues which he attempted to improve. His main motivation was his lack of ability to achieve high marks:

If my average is 60 now because of my English. I know everything, not everything, I know many things about content. For example, last semester I had [unit name] and my mark for mid semester test was 80%. For final exam was 82%. But I get 3 out of 20 for participation mark because I couldn’t participate because … I wasn’t confident of my English. I knew the content and the problem, the law and sometimes the marks showed me I was much better than other students, most students. But because I couldn’t participate I lost 17 marks.

Akbar described the obstacles he faced which motivated him to improve his language skills by listening extensively to English programs and writing extra essays. He noted, “I try to improve myself”. Similarly, Abdul said he only learnt basic English in KSA. He was highly motivated to improve his EL proficiency so he practised both his listening and writing skills outside the classroom environment: “I follow the rules the teachers gave us and listening a lot, trying to speak as much as I can and I do extra writing. I try and write, listening, writing”. APC participant feedback indicates motivation and acceptance of responsibility to improve specific areas of weaknesses such as listening skills in order to achieve eventual academic success.

Similar to APC participants, some CHC participants developed strategies to improve their listening skills. Serena mentioned that she did “a little bit of practice” by watching English TV shows and listening to the radio. However, she felt that her listening skills did not improve significantly and her view is that “the longer you stay here and you get better”. Wayne explained that he watched “Australian Story [and listened to] BBC” both to improve his listening skills and to learn more about Australian culture. Another strategy Wayne utilised was to practice speaking after listening to something so that he
could also improve his speaking skills. Participants’ comments show awareness of the need for personal improvements and included a range of strategies to improve listening skills.

Writing Extension

Four of the APC participants were engaged with writing extension activities, which are self-determined and done outside of classroom contact time. Asmah was particularly motivated to improve her writing skills: “[S]ometimes in my house I try to write a diary. For example, today I did this and this and this to improve my writing”. Akbar also perceived his writing skills to be lacking and practiced by writing additional essays outside of set assignments. Despite achieving high grades, Miriam felt the need to improve on EL skills to obtain higher grades as the lecturers had mentioned in class that ISs had to improve on their writing. Miriam attended writing workshops to make improvements, as she perceived her writing to be lacking in organisation: “I going to have a workshop in writing next week with a group of my colleagues to improve myself”. She believed her writing had:

[I]mproved, but actually I think it’s not that well organised … although I take a mark like the Australian’s mark. But still the professor, they are giving a comment for international students that English writing it has to be improved more. Also one of the professor they ask us if we are still facing a problem to see their previous English lecturer. But I don’t know why there is this problem when we are taking marks like the Australians. So maybe they are marking the Australians based on the knowledge not the English.

Miriam’s comments highlight the pressures faced by ISs along with stereotypes which sometimes exist in academic discourse. Miriam’s positive response was to improve herself, which shows high levels of motivation.

A few CHC participants attempted to improve their writing skills. For example, Alice used Facebook, a social media that does not exist in China, not only for social purposes but also to improve her vocabulary and writing skills. She explained that when she comes across unfamiliar words when reading news feeds she “search [es] for the meaning and find my dictionary. Then I use those words when I write”. Initially reticent about making comments on Facebook, Alice developed confidence later and made comments (“I make comments and it’s interesting”). Similarly, Edna commented: “I like Facebook, help me improve writing”. Sabrina attempted to improve her writing skills through a constant process of writing and rewriting as she
believed that “if you start writing again only a little at a time, you see your writing will improve”. Sabrina was highly focussed on her thesis writing and constantly rewrote sections especially when attempting to synthesise literature. While writing activities tend to be more time-consuming and require more attention, both APC and CHC participants utilised the strategy of additional writing activities.

Obtaining assistance

As participants had an intrinsic desire to perform well, they actively obtained assistance from various external sources, including the university Learning Centre and peers. Five of the nine APC participants and five of the eight CHC participants obtained assistance from various external sources.

The strategy of obtaining assistance from the Learning Centre does not appear to be common among the participants. Although the participants were aware of the Learning Centre and the services it offers such as plagiarism workshops, sessions on academic writing and grammar as well as individual consultations on assignments, only Habib, Miriam, Susan and Sabrina made use of this facility. Habib realised that he had to improve his spelling and grammar as he failed in self-correction, so he sought assistance from the Learning Centre:

> It's like thinking about the problem a lot … I tried very hard to solve that. Like self-correction, I tried to do that but I failed with it … but when I found the Learning Centre is very helpful.

Habib found it beneficial to work with the Learning Centre as it removed some of the pressures he faced with self-editing. Miriam attended writing and grammar workshops based on feedback from her tutors that ISs should work on these areas. Similarly, Sabrina found it beneficial to work with the staff from the Learning Centre: “The staff proofread for me … every week they help [to] improve our English”. Susan said she “try some English workshop” at the Learning Centre which was only somewhat helpful; thus she approached her friends for assistance. Participants who were aware of the Learning Centre made use of it, but the majority were either unaware or deliberately chose not to make use of this facility.

Another strategy developed by participants was to obtain assistance from peers and other sources. For example, Habib attempted to improve himself by communicating with different people and obtaining advice and feedback on his work:
I start to communicate with every person that I had, every chance, even if he not relate to my study. Just to have his opinion about my topic because you know if you are in the middle of the problem you don’t have clear opinion. You have to go out and that’s very difficult. You’re stuck in your situation so you have to have other people opinion who are not involved in your problem. They can see it in clear way so they can discuss and explain the weakness of your situation or your studies.

Asking for assistance was not easy for Habib, but he recognised the importance of doing so to make progress. In that respect, Habib showed that he was developing confidence and was willing to accept the suggestions of others for eventual success in his PhD: “Sometimes you need to get help off other professionals, not just your supervisor or the faculty member of your department”. Asmah sought assistance when she experienced issues while engaged in writing up her candidacy proposal:

For example, firstly when I start to do the candidacy or my proposal I was very confused and I didn’t know from which point I should start ... I searching by computer, go to library, ask librarian. I think it’s good for me because also this is good for my language because make me more confident.

She also approached other Iraqi students who were more experienced than her to assist with EL issues:

Sometimes I ask other students from Iraq. We have one student - he is a teacher in English language and he is very good. He’s old man. Sometimes I ask him to check my grammar or to give me some idea about the grammar.

Minah obtained assistance from her peers: “Actually, I’ve got some friends who have, yes, helped me … I ask my Iraqi friends to check my work before I submit it to be marked”. Abdul also felt in need of assistance, which he obtained from friends: “I ask friends to help, I didn’t have a proper tutor for English”. Based on participants’ comments, peers were perceived as effective sources of assistance.

Similar to APC participants, CHC participants obtained assistance from their peers. For example, Susan commented:

Sometimes I find [ask] my friend to help me to proof read my essay ... Try to get someone to give me the comments and my friends help me to edit my assignment and they will tell me and show me what kind of mistakes I make. I try to remember them and not make the same mistakes next time.

Wayne sought advice from a more experienced classmate:

There was a person helping me quite a lot. He’s a citizen, I mean he has Malaysian background but he has been here for more than 10 years so he’s also my classmate, a friend. So he teach me a lot. He tell me to try to
know the Australian culture and he always try to get us engaged in class in group work.

Wayne’s comments indicate the importance of personal networks in enabling adjustments to occur. Wayne also used his supervisor’s feedback to improve:

The first time I write my assignment in the main course it was not that good. But we got quite important feedback from our supervisor and even after class you can talk with him or her to get more feedback. So yes, I mean, if you ask they will help you.

Wayne’s observation that students should be proactive in obtaining feedback from teaching staff indicates he managing his learning in the host environment. Minah used a similar strategy as she explained she improved through her supervisor’s feedback: “Her [supervisor] feedback improved me. I can't imagine myself and she says [said], ‘Look how you improved’, within a specific time because [of] feedback”. As Wayne and Minah explained, feedback was instrumental in helping them make improvements.

A range of personal strategies were utilised by the APC and the CHC participants to obtain assistance from different sources. Some participants made use of the Learning Centre, while the majority were either unfamiliar with the service or chose not to consult the centre. Both APC and CHC participants obtained assistance from their peers, which they perceived to be helpful, credible and comfortable. These strategies highlight that participants’ actively sought to overcome various weaknesses in order to adjust and meet the learning demands of the host culture.

**Facilitation of Coping Strategies**

Development of coping strategies was facilitated by assessment structures and participation on an APP. Each of these is discussed in turn.

**Assessment Structure**

Both APC and CHC participants identified assessment structures as being fundamentally different between the home and host cultures. In the home culture, participants were only exposed to summative assessments. However, they were favourably disposed towards the combined structure of formative/continuous and summative assessments in the host learning environment, which they perceived as assisting learning and facilitating adjustments. Parvez found the assessment structure in Australia less stressful than Iran:
Because you know when you are studying undergraduate level everything is spread during the semester, you have assignments, you have presentation, the student working on this kind of things and a final exam, mid semester, these all add together and your final exam is explained to you how much it was. In Iran it's different. In Iran you have final exam and so often they have mid semester exam. It’s not like that you have assignment, it’s not like that you have presentations. So not so much exam stress here (Australia).

Parvez’s comments indicate that having a range of formative assessments helps with learning as there is less pressure on students to perform on one major, end of semester exam. Abdul explained how he altered his thinking towards formative assessments:

I’m used to having the examination and the units. Like when we finish this unit you have to examine on it and you have the final examination or mid-term examination. But in some units in Australia we don't have that examination. You have only case study or report or an assignment, major assignment. I find it's more useful actually than the examination itself because it gives you time to read a lot of articles, a lot of books, a lot of things. Like they told me to do an assignment on this particular disease, you need to read about 50 or 60 articles about it so you can do the report properly. But if you do an examination you will just read the modules that you have, you'll read the lectures that you have. So at the beginning a bit different … a bit difficult but when I got used to it I found it's more useful. That's one of the differences that I found there. I found it was good.

Abdul recognised the benefits of assignments as opposed to exams as he felt it led to deeper learning:

But I said just imagine that the good things about it that you do not have the stress of the examination, Just imagine that you have time for this assessment, you have chances to review it with your lecturer. You have a chance to go to the editors and make it better. You can consult anyone about it, just the good things to gain marks.

During his time in Australia, Abdul changed his attitude towards the assignment and recognised the advantages of this approach to assessment. Akbar explained:

In Iran everything is theoretical. You have, for example, a book and at the end of semester … you need to memorise something from the book and having [have a] test, nothing more. But here a lot of assignments, a lot of assessments and, yes, you understand it better not just memorise something … For example, a lot of assignments and assessments lets you to understand more and more and not just memorise something.

For Akbar, one of the major advantages of formative assessments is that it encourages understanding as opposed to memorising for the purpose of passing exams. APC participants found the combination of formative and summative assessment reduced stress levels and contributed to learning.
CHC participants highlighted differences between assessment structures in China and Australia, with the perception that the latter assessments required more than mastery of content knowledge. For example, Alice explained that assessments in China were content-based as it “test[s] about the information”. Susan said in China “you get an examination and let’s see if you remember the concept or not, that’s all. It does not require you to learn more and explore the ideas”. Serena described the difference between Australian assessments and the content-based aspect of Chinese assessments:

A lot of the exams here, it's kind of like short answer or like essay writing. It's like fully testing how you understanding this topic and why. In China … those who really good [at] memorising, they memorise the key points, finish the exam, get really good mark, but they forget everything after the exam.

Serena’s comments indicate that Australian assessments require in-depth understanding while Chinese assessments test content knowledge.

However, some participants found Australian assessments stressful. Wayne explained: “The most difficult I found is that the final exam in my course because here the final exam is a written one, even I know the knowledge but I cannot organise quite well during two hours worth”. Wayne’s comments indicate the challenges he faced with summative assessments due to time constraints and the pressures of having to think quickly in EL. Despite the challenges identified by Wayne, participants’ comments indicate favourable perceptions of Australian assessments.

The formative/continuous nature of Australian assessment provided participants with enhanced learning experiences as they could engage with materials at a deeper level of understanding compared to the summative assessment and rote learning in their home culture.

Role of Academic Preparatory Program (APP) in Facilitating Adjustments

APPs played an instrumental role in participants’ academic adjustments. The APP was undertaken by 14 of the participants prior to their mainstream studies to achieve the requisite EL proficiency requirements of the university. The advantages of completing an APP, which provided a bridge between the host and home academic cultures, were a common theme that emerged during the interviews. Participant feedback indicates that the APP prepared students by enabling them to learn about the Australian classroom culture. The importance participants attributed to the APP experiences included learning
Learning a new academic culture

Both APC and CHC participants explained that the APP enabled them to learn about Australian academic culture. Habib referred to the growth he experienced in the APP and emphasised the pathway course was a “learning period” during which he learned about Australian academic culture. Similarly, Miriam stated that the APP taught her about cultural difference and respect:

[I]t gave me knowledge and taught me how to deal with another culture and another people. And it really taught me how to respect other culture. Sometimes you expect from person to deal with you as if you were in your country and this is wrong. You have to expect anything and everything and you have to deal with it and cope with it.

Jaffar made the choice to do a pathway program voluntarily as he felt it was necessary to improve on his preparatory skills prior to commencing mainstream studies:

Even I have unconditional offer but I choose to go through [APP] because people they told me that you feel the university environment. Especially the research, how to write literature, critical review.

Serena noted the advantages of the APP:

I think that that's the most useful and helpful course for me in Australia. I couldn't imagine I can survive for my Bachelor degree without the [APP] course. The [APP] course teach you how to study in Australia. Because I was from China and I think the Chinese education and Western education is quite different. Like in China we all learn to memorise and to finish the exam. Pretty much everything have standard answers. So I spent a lot of time to memorise rather than think but in Australia it's a little bit different. There's more like focus on how you think, teach you. So I have no idea about education structures in Australia. These things I get from the [APP] course.

Wayne explained, “The first thing is that the bridging course helps me to get used to the learning environment in the university so I can always get earlier than my classmates, even I enter the main course”. Wayne’s desire to be ahead academically was achieved through participation in the APP.

Participant feedback highlights that one of the key advantages of attending the APP was being inducted into a new and unfamiliar academic culture. This enabled the participants to develop their understanding of Australian tertiary academic culture which assisted with academic adjustment as they learned to think critically and
independently. It is necessary to note that despite the knowledge they gained from the APP, they still faced challenges in their mainstream study.

Developing critical thinking skills

Both APC and CHC participants indicated that their ability to think critically was substantially enhanced by attending the APP. APC participants were positive about developing their critical thinking skills. Miriam stated that the critical thinking skills she had been exposed to provide a “good base” for her as her graduate studies involved writing critical appraisals:

[A]bout the critical review and this is what we are actually doing in our course, in our graduate study we have to write and submit a critical appraisal…it was a really good base for me

Similarly, Asmah mentioned the benefits of learning the process of evaluating articles and other reading materials which focussed on critical thinking in one unit: “[Unit name] was very difficult for us but after I finished I think it’s good because you can evaluate articles or materials, any articles”. Akbar also described the benefits of the pathway course in developing his ability to think critically: “[Unit name]…was very, very, very helpful for me in university … critical thinking is good for everything because we need critical thinking in university”. Jaffar expressed similar sentiments: “[U]seful how to go through journals, how to critique some articles. Even now we have an article we use to critique. So honestly, it helped so much”. APC participants found exposure to critical thinking skills in the APP to be beneficial.

Similar opinions were expressed by CHC participants who found the critical thinking aspect of the APP useful and beneficial for both their classroom learning as well as lifelong learning. For example, Susan explained the usefulness of learning critical thinking: “Because what all I learn I can use in my Bachelor course. Yeah and actually it is very useful for me especially critical thinking and writing”. She elaborated on critical thinking skills:

[Unit name] give you some questions and you try to criticise the conclusions or points. I think there is some things like which way you started criticising it, like are they logical, are they really fully supported, are the references really update. Makes you think where are the resources from, are they from the internet or are they from really high standard public articles. That's really what I learnt because it teaches you how to criticise these things. I found that's really impress for me at that time because the way you learn it then you start to judge it. That’s the one thing I found was really interesting for my life. I started to become really
Serena also explained the relevance of critical thinking to her profession, a process that began during the APP:

It’s more about like in the medical imaging field it’s more about the diagnostic and the radiation protections because when we do the x-ray or CT scan obviously we use the radiation to the patients. We provide the imaging quality for the diagnosis but the radiation have the side effect for patient. So it always have the controversial topic about what is right, should we do these examinations for the patients or should we don’t do it. Then I find these things is not always like have standard answers like because you have to think in the course or in the clinical environment. Sometimes we use the more radiation for these patients but sometimes we use less radiation for the other patients. It depends or the clinical question we want to address and it depends on the patient’s situation, are they child bearing woman or are they children or are they really like a late stage of cancer patients or they really old. So we use different protocols for different patients. We don’t have like a standard rules for everything. I think to learn from that we really have to judge the situations.

Serena’s comments articulate that a key advantage of the APP was in enabling her to develop critical thinking skills. As the process began during the APP, Serena was able to transfer and develop these skills further in different contexts and situations, highlighting the long-term advantages of critical thinking.

Participant comments indicate that critical thinking skills were an important aspect of the APP, which they found beneficial. As critical thinking forms the basis of Australian university studies, participants’ exposure to this skill on the APP assisted with eventual adjustments.

Researching and referencing skills

Both APC and CHC commented that the focus on introductory research skills in the APP was beneficial for them. Minah found the focus on research skills especially beneficial for her PhD studies:

The research subject is really helpful because I study PhD … because you have contact to other people and get ideas and you can find your mistake and you can change.

Miriam provided a similar view: “[APP] course really for me helpful because it was about research methods and we have to do a lot of research”. Akbar highlighted the APP course developed his research writing skills: “I think [APP] course good for writing skills for research report”. Similarly, Jaffar said, “[APP] course develop our
research writing or academic, scientific writing”. Based on APC participants’ comments, the APP assisted with the introduction of research skills and research report writing.

CHC participants highlighted the APP as enabling them to develop their research and referencing skills. Susan explained she was able to use the information she gained from the APP both for personal benefit and to share that information with others who had not completed a similar course:

I still remember when I learn about Lit Review and I remember after one week, my friends in HK ask me how to write a Lit Review. And then I share all my notes with her. Actually, I also write a lot of Lit Reviews in my Bachelor course, so it is very useful.

This view is mirrored in Jacinta’s comments as she described the preparation she acquired from being introduced to research and referencing skills, which are fundamental aspects of her mainstream course:

The [APP] course is very useful, especially the research method. It needs more understanding in how to do the research. I remember the very first assignment I had was to write an essay which is quite long but it needs to include some reference. If I don’t do the bridging course I would never know what is reference, because they have totally different names about reference in China. People not quite pay attention to reference. So at that time I thought, the bridging course helped me and after that I make some good works. I try to remember what I did in previous course and that help me to do the research ... It’s like literature review and this kind of thing.

From Jacinta’s comments, Chinese referencing conventions are different to Australia, and not always adhered. Wayne made a similar observation as he explained the APP dedicated “quite a lot of time to learn [teach] the reference … search and referencing. They are all important”. From participants’ comments, research and referencing skills were different from their home country and the APP introduced them to Australian academic conventions.

**Improving EL and Other Skills**

In addition to learning more about critical thinking and research writing, participants’ comments highlighted their EL proficiency skills improved through the APP, which made them more prepared and developed their self-confidence. This included communication skills, writing and listening skills. APC participants highlighted their ability to make formal oral presentations improved through the APP. Asmah commented:
In [APP] course … presentation practice is good for students to improve the quality and the speaking and the discussion with the students, with the teachers.

Similarly, Miriam stated: “In mainstream a lot of presentation you have to give … so if I did not take this [APP] course at the beginning, really, I will face some difficulties”. Wayne explained that presentation skills were important in his mainstream studies, which were facilitated by the APP: “I mean presentation skills important for my studies”. As the participants were from academic cultures with limited opportunities for formal oral presentations, the APP provided students with the structure of an oral presentation as well as information on delivery skills. Participants mentioned the opportunity to make individual presentations and group presentations was especially useful as it provided them with information and practice which was of significant advantage when they needed to make oral presentations during their mainstream courses.

Participants mentioned the APP enabled overall improvement of EL skills, allowing them to develop their self-confidence. For example, Akbar stated:

After [APP] course my English skills they were much better and my self-confidence improve as well, as the course was great for English preparation.

Minah noted a similar improvement but emphasised “my listening and reading skills especially improved. I get more benefit from [APP] in how to improve my English language”. APC participants’ comments highlight presentation skills and EL skills as benefits from attending the APP.

CHC participants expressed similar views on the benefits of the APP for improving EL proficiency skills. For example, Serena explained:

The course teach me like the language and improve my English skills. I think that that's the most useful and helpful course for me in Australia. I couldn't imagine I can survive for my Bachelor degree without the course.

Serena’s comments elucidate the key advantage of APP courses, which is overall preparation for mainstream courses. Jacinta also explained that the APP “was very useful … especially the research method and some communication skill and the culture shock thing”. Jacinta’s comments describe a few benefits of APP courses, which include both academic and sociocultural aspects. Sabrina believed that “every class in [APP] is useful”, while Susan felt that APP “was very useful because what all I learn I can use in my Bachelor course”. Both APC and CHC participants’ comments highlight
how the APP prepared them for their mainstream studies, making them feel more confident.

_Adjusting to collaborative learning_

Collaborative learning was another aspect of students’ acculturation experience which was significantly enhanced by participating in the APP. As explained in Sub-Proposition 2.1, collaborative learning posed a challenge but participants recognised its inherent benefits, which led to eventual adjustments. In this section, the role of the APP in facilitating adjustments to collaborative learning will be described.

For many of the participants, having to work in groups both in class and on group assignments outside the classroom initially posed a challenge. However, as the APP provided opportunities for collaborative learning, participants were better able to adjust when they commenced their mainstream studies despite some of the linguistic challenges. Jaffar expressed this succinctly: “Since we start from bridging course we know this one because I was having my own research group”. This emphasises the components of individual work and the opportunities for group work provided on the APP.

Aspects of group work were particularly challenging for some of the female participants from conservative APC societies. Miriam’s comments provide insights into the challenges she faced: “At the beginning it was difficult. I was so shy because it was the first time to be with men but I learned how to work in a group and to understand other cultures”. Coming from a background where segregation between men and women was the norm, Miriam had considerable difficulty working in mixed groups, especially when it involved men from her own culture. Miriam attempted to overcome her initial shyness, indicative of her discomfort, by telling herself to “forget about it”. In this respect, the cultural preparedness Miriam obtained from studying on the APP was beneficial in allowing her to bridge the gap between working in predominantly female groups to mixed groups. It is important to note that while Miriam was largely successful in eventually adjusting to a mixed environment, she still had considerable difficulty when dealing with men from her own cultural background. As she stated:

Being with men from my own country is difficult because in Saudi Arabia there are lot of barriers between men and women and you feel there is a barrier when you are dealing with a man especially from the same country. So when we come over here we bring all those things with us.
In addition to highlighting Miriam’s challenges with working in mixed groups, the comments indicate the cultural gaps that exist between KSA and Australia, particularly in relation to male/female relationships. Breaking down these barriers is of vital importance for Miriam’s academic success. Miriam’s strategy to do this is to suspend traditional beliefs, which have been inculcated in her, in order to “deal normally” to be one of the group in Australia. By accepting the Australian culture, she is appropriately placed to benefit from the host learning environment.

CHC participants highlighted their lack of familiarity with collaborative learning and explained that the APP provided an introduction to group work. For example, Alice said, “I studied English course, the teacher asked me to a job in a team … first time is hard and then okay, it’s cool”. Similarly Jacinta explained, “Like when I first do the group work in [APP] it was quite difficult in my mind, but later was okay”. Similarly, Wayne mentioned that APP taught him “a lot of things like group work”. CHC participants’ feedback shows that the APP provided an introduction to group work. Working in mixed groups, an issue identified among APC female participants, was not an issue experienced by CHC female participants. Through participating in the APP, participants were introduced to collaborative learning. However, collaborative learning was still considered a challenge, as presented in Sub-Proposition 2.1.

Summary of Sub-Proposition 3.2

Participants’ internalised extrinsic motivation was a strong driver in motivating them to achieve academic success. Internalised extrinsic motivation was shown as participants’ accepted personal responsibility for their learning and altered their thinking, eventually developing independent learning behaviours. Participants showed their openness to the changed learning environment as they recognised the inherent benefits of collaborative learning. Motivated by a strong desire to attain high levels of academic achievement, participants developed a range of self-improvement strategies, which included extensive listening and writing activities and seeking assistance from a range of sources. The combination of formative and summative assessments and participation on an APP facilitated participants’ adjustments to a changed learning environment.

Summary and Discussion of Proposition 3
Proposition 3 described participants’ responses to a different classroom culture. Although participants initially faced some challenges, they eventually developed learning behaviours to cope with the demands of the Australian academic environment. Participants were motivated by a combination of influences. These included internal pressures and stressors such as fear of loss of face, financial constraints, and demands of sponsorship bodies complicated by war-torn backgrounds specifically for APC participants. Influenced by internalised extrinsic motivation, participants gradually developed a range of coping strategies. In some cases this was facilitated through participation in the APP. This section explains the role of learning goals and motivation in enabling participants to develop coping strategies as they reconstructed their identities.

Regardless of ethnicity, the common thread through all the ISs’ interviews was the desire to achieve academically, indicating high levels of motivation and a focus on learning goals. Despite the challenges faced by participants in regards to adjustments, their academic performance is fairly high with most of them achieving SWA’s and CWA’s above 65%, an achievement made possible mainly due to clear learning goals and high motivation levels. Participants’ motivations included desire for academic success to prevent loss of ‘face’, to bring honour to their families, for the good of self/country, and due to financial pressures (family and sponsorship demands). In particular, learning goals are important for ISs who have time limits imposed on them due to financial constraints, regardless of whether they are government sponsored or family supported. High levels of academic performance are an instrumental aspect of their learning situation, which ultimately resulted in high levels of motivation.

Participants’ comments indicate that the APP prepared them for a new learning environment, enabling them to recognise that their former dependence on the teacher for all knowledge would not lead to academic success in the Australian HE environment. Thus, they transitioned from viewing the teacher as the knowledge giver to the teacher as knowledge facilitator. The findings presented in Proposition 3 indicate that participants developed different strategies to adjust to the new learning environment despite facing challenges. Studies have concluded that English for Academic Purposes courses are fundamental in improving students’ language proficiency and teaching them relevant study skills they will need throughout their degree (Foster, 2012; Gunawardena & Wilson, 2012; Sawir, 2005; Son & Park, 2014). This was substantiated in the current
study, which found that the academic cultural experiences provided in the APP provided participants with a smooth transition to mainstream courses. As argued by Gilbert, ISs not only encounter general culture shock but also “academic culture shock”, a subset of culture shock defined as “a case of incongruent schemata about higher education in the students’ home country and the host country” (2000, p. 14). Often, this is assisted by attitudinal acceptance of the changed learning environment. The key issue is the implicit disciplinary ‘know-how’ necessary for the process of enculturation into the new academic knowledge which is perceived as unavailable to new students (Krause, 2001). The process of adjustment occurs through “trial and error” rather than through explicit learning (Hellstén, 2002, p. 8). Similar to Wang’s (2012) study, ISs in this study indicate positive coping and resilient behaviours and the development of a broad range of coping strategies, which had a significant impact on their adjustment. Adjusting ways of thinking about learning were reported by the participants in the current study as a necessary process to adapt to the new academic culture. They were able to accept personal responsibility for their learning, recognise the benefits of collaborative learning and develop appropriate management strategies. All of these involved the development of critical thinking skills.

Both APC and CHC participants can be described as learning-goal oriented students who engage in learning to acquire knowledge and increase their competence, and who consider effort to be the main cause of success or failure. Learning-goal oriented students have a strong belief in their ability to influence their academic results through sheer effort (Pintrich, 2003). This was illustrated in Proposition 3 as participant responses show development of a range of coping strategies to address the challenges identified in Proposition 2. Perspectives of control and personal responsibility for academic results contribute positively to development of learning-oriented motivation or regulation of learning (Pintrich, 1990, 2003). Participants’ learning styles are not culturally bound and can change according to different educational environments. APC and CHC participants’ feedback indicates their adaptability to a new environment, demonstrating for this group of participants that cultural influences do not lead to fixed learning styles. Further, participants’ comments indicate that they welcome the change from an authority-centred didactic teaching style to a more participative, student-centred learning approach. Cultural and contextual influences were instrumental in the learning behaviours developed by participants. Participants of this study indicate the possession of clear goals in wanting to achieve good results for personal benefits, which they believe will be
translated ultimately to personal and home country benefit. These goals have been instrumental in increasing their levels of motivation, allowing for more active, positive participation in the new learning environment.

Participants developed strategies to empower themselves and enhanced their learning as they negotiated a new transient identity. Identity creation occurred through a process of constructing and renegotiating identity as ISs are agentic individuals who exhibit the notion that identity is multilayered and pluralised (Koehne, 2005). Participants’ active decision to take control shows the “reconstruction of the self” (Koehne, 2005, p. 106). The identity constructed by the participants is reflective of Hall’s description of identity:

[A] point of suture, between on the one hand the discourses and discursive practices which attempt to ‘interpolate, speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses and, on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be ‘spoken.’ (1996, p. 5-6)

Hall’s view of identity is relevant to ISs who can be viewed as active, empowered individuals who attempt to negotiate the demands of a new culture. The “sutures” indicated by Hall are “points of temporary attachment”, as identity evolves and takes on different layers (Hall, 1996, p. 5-6). In the context of ISs, the identity construction in the host environment is a temporary strategy to achieve desired goals as the “subject invests in the position” (Hall, 1996, p. 5-6). ISs are heavily invested in their overseas study which necessitates that the challenges they encounter are addressed in some way, showing the “agency of the individual to sort and sift, and accept or reject” the dominant discourse (Koehne, 2005, p. 107). However, cultural interactions occur which lead to the reconstruction of the self. The process of renegotiation of the self illustrates the reinvention and responses of ISs to the flux of flows and ebbs in the host culture. Pennycook suggests the need for a “pedagogy of flow” as “students can no longer be understood as located in bounded time and space in and around their classrooms, but rather are participants in a much broader set of trans-cultural practices” (2005, p. 29). Viewed in this light, participants are constructing dynamic identities in the academic context. Thus, the “learning styles” literature, which categorises binaries between Eastern and Western cultures of learning in terms of collectivist-individualist and dialectic-dialogic frameworks, is inappropriate if ISs are viewed as actively constructing themselves as they move across and between different academic and social worlds (Lugones, 2003). The identity constructed by the participants appears to be ‘transient’ in response to the current situation, which necessitates the suspension of the conventional identity to achieve learning goals.
Participants’ responses and the empowering strategies they developed are indicative of their strong sense of agency. Motivation plays an instrumental role in the achievements of any student, but there seem to be distinguishing factors in the case of ISs. Intrinsic motivation played a part in participants’ decision to study abroad, evident as they articulated their desire to gain knowledge in a foreign education system in a Western country. The range of ISs’ motivations and agendas are diverse. Internalised extrinsic motivation played a major part in participants’ academic adjustments. Doherty and Singh (2005) question the desirability of ISs’ adaptability, which they believe to be a consequence of assumptions of Western pedagogical superiority. As teaching and learning environments are a consequence of the wider sociocultural and political climate of the country, ISs are inevitably confronted with differences. ISs recognise the need to address these if they are to achieve their goals. Participants’ responses indicate a desire to empower themselves and illustrate skilfulness in negotiating different linguistic codes and communicative norms (Lugones, 2003). Instead of viewing ISs’ response as merely adjustments, ISs should be viewed as agentic individuals who are empowering themselves by developing strategies to enhance their learning and achieve their learning goals.

**Conclusion**

This chapter presented the findings in relation to Propositions 2 and 3. Proposition 2 explained the main challenges faced by participants were related to lack of familiarity and understanding of Australian academic culture and EL proficiency issues. These challenges were gradually overcome through the development of coping strategies, as described in Proposition 3. Participants developed a range of coping strategies in order to prevent loss of face and were significantly influenced by financial pressures. Coping strategies included accepting personal responsibility for learning, developing independent learning behaviours, recognising the inherent benefits of collaborative learning, and the development of a range of self-improvement strategies. Propositions 2 and 3 indicated that participants were actively engaged in addressing the academic challenges encountered as they positioned themselves to respond to the demands of the host academic environment. The next chapter, Chapter Eight, presents participants’ adjustment to the host sociocultural environment through Proposition 4.
CHAPTER EIGHT
FINDINGS 3: SOCIOCULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

Introduction
The aim of this study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of ISs from APCs and CHCs in their adjustments to studying at an Australian university. Chapter Five provided the findings and discussion in relation to Proposition 1, which focused on the academic culture of the home and host environments and identified possible areas of mismatch in expectations. Chapter Six presented Propositions 2 and 3 in relation to the academic environment. Proposition 2 described the challenges faced by participants, while Proposition 3 explained the strategies developed by participants to address the identified challenges. This chapter presents the findings in relation to the sociocultural environment, covering Proposition 4 (see Table 5.1 in Chapter Five).

Proposition 4: Sociocultural Environment
While ISs exhibit a degree of successful adaptation to the academic environment of the host country, broader sociocultural adjustment is limited with ISs developing a range of different strategies.

Human beings are social animals by nature and any study which explores the adjustment of ISs must be cognisant of the new sociocultural environment which ISs have to learn to navigate and negotiate. The first section presents Sub-Proposition 4.1 and discusses the challenges faced by participants in the host sociocultural environment. The subsequent section presents Sub-Proposition 4.2 and describes the coping strategies developed by participants. Throughout the various sections of the findings, information relating to APC participants is presented first followed by information from CHC participants.

Sub-Proposition 4.1: Sociocultural Challenges
*ISs social adaptation is inhibited due to issues of EL proficiency, lack of sociocultural competence and limited opportunities for social interaction due to ISs’ age, cultural background and family context in addition to actual and perceived lack of hospitality.*

Four sociocultural challenges faced by participants impeded their sociocultural adjustment: EL issues, lack of sociocultural competence, limitations and restrictions in social interactions, and lack of hospitality.
**EL issues**

Participants’ comments highlight that EL issues are a major hindrance in both the academic and sociocultural settings. Proposition 2 highlighted EL proficiency issues as a challenge in the academic context, yet participants managed these to some extent. However, EL issues were significantly challenging for participants in the sociocultural context. Participants’ lack of EL competence and fear of judgement prevented them from participating in social circles where EL was predominantly spoken. Major issues identified by participants related to differences in EL usage in academic and social contexts, Australian accents and the rapid rate of speech, Australian colloquial language, and fear of judgement and ridicule.

One of the biggest challenges faced by APC participants was the difference between academic English, as used for the purposes of studying in an English speaking tertiary environment, and social English which tends to be culture-specific. While the former is based primarily on familiar technical terms and content knowledge, social English requires cultural understanding which can be unfamiliar and challenging for ISs to navigate. For example, Eliza explained the different expectations of living in an English-speaking environment and provided an insight into the differences between academic and social English, stating she was more confident in academic situations compared to social circumstances:

> I don’t have a problem with professional things you know. In my studies I don’t have any problems. But everything related to the social - I just feel so bad. Everything related to study, in relation to academic things whereas to my profession, is good. I pick it up very soon and I’m very confident to speak about that. But when I want to speak about something very personal or social I’m not confident.

Eliza’s comments indicate frustration and lack of confidence at her inability to navigate the sociocultural environment. She continued, “I personally think for my course I can handle everything, but for social living not at all. This is completely different things. Completely”. Eliza expressed frustration with her lack of proficiency in English in social contexts as social English tends to be culturally nuanced. This was the case even though she had obtained high scores on her IELTS, especially on the speaking band which implied proficient speaking skills. However, this proficiency was limited to academic purposes, which was challenging in itself as shown in Proposition 2. Eliza perceived her EL skills as being inadequate; as such she lacked confidence in interacting with domestic speakers where the cultural nuances of language assume
greater importance. Eliza stated: “My overall score was 6.5, my speaking was 7.5, but when I came here I couldn’t speak at all, I was mute”. Eliza explained that she lacked knowledge of the different meanings of English words used in a social context and the appropriateness of particular words in specific situations:

So for any instance I don’t know what to use. You know people are using something that I’m not used to. I don’t know yet I know it. I know what does it mean but I don’t know to use this in this situation, the other in that situation.

As indicated in Eliza’s comments, lack of understanding of sociocultural nuances and the many different contexts and uses of EL words were challenging for her.

Similarly, Parvez explained that he needed to make sociocultural adjustments but was inhibited by lack of knowledge of social English:

The university is a part of your life, it’s not everything. In the lecture I can understand because lecturer they know that you are international student. They know that, so they talk [in] such a way you can understand and they write it [in] such a way you can read and can understand. It’s not like the real life. But in the other part of your life outside of the university I feel that I still need to learn so many things.

Parvez’s comment reflects three issues. The first aspect of Parvez’s comments relates to the differences between the learning environment of the university classroom and “real life”, and acknowledged that studying at university is not the entirety of his life. Parvez realised that living in a world outside university is necessary, but the EL strategies he requires to achieve this successfully appear to be lacking. The second aspect of Parvez’s comments point to the ‘safe’ environment of the university where allowances are made for inadequacies in ISs’ comprehension of information. As Parvez noted, lecturers tend to speak at a slower pace and use language that is more accessible for ISs. However, similar allowances are not made in real world communication which has the potential of causing struggles for ISs. Finally, Parvez added that he has a lot to learn from a sociocultural perspective in order to adapt successfully. Participants’ views indicate they faced significant challenges in the sociocultural environment as they lacked understanding of the cultural nuances of language.

Australian accents, along with the rapid rate of speech, posed difficulties for some APC participants in social situations. For example, despite being confident interacting with both his peers and teachers in the classroom, Jaffar explained the rapid rate of Australian speech limited his ability to function effectively in the social context:
People [in] shops, they speak so fast. Not like the lecturer, because the lecturer they know that they have multicultural students. So maybe they speak not as fast as the people outside. And because I used to listen to a lot of medical terms so I’m in the environment of science. So I expect most of the talk would be around, for example we are now studying, now genetics, everything about genetics, DNA, cloning, so most of the talk is science. I understand it automatically. When you got outside I feel some people maybe they are speaking so fast.

Jaffar further explained: “especially with the native Australian, I think it’s more difficult outside [the university]”. Similarly, Minah commented: “Australians they are talking, so hard to understand to catch the ideas”. In Minah’s view, social situations are challenging as Australian accents tend to be more pronounced outside the classroom:

[T]he lecturers are teaching and learning and their accent and their speaking is more clear than outside Australian native speakers … [S]o when inside the classroom [I] can understand [what] the teacher is talking about, the lecture. When you go outside it’s difficult, different accent from teacher and different topics.

Minah’s comments indicate that classroom English is modulated for ease of accessibility for ISs. Her comments provide an apt summary of the issues faced by ISs with respect to the differences in their experiences in the classroom and the challenges posed in the sociocultural environment where language is spoken more quickly with a broader accent.

The rapid rate of Australian speech also posed a problem for Asmah as her confidence levels were adversely affected. She commented, “Especially when the people speak very quickly I can’t understand … and if they ask me something and I didn’t understand I say sorry because my English not good”. Asmah explained the reasons for her lack of confidence:

Asmah I face difficulties when I speak because in my house I always speak Arabic and I don’t have a lot of people, Australian people, to speak English. Most of my friends are from Iraq so just when I come to uni I speak English.

Researcher So you mean outside of uni you don’t speak English at all?

Asmah Yes, because my friends are from Iraq and I speak at home in Arabic. I know this is not good for me but I don’t have friends from Australia. I think English, any new language, it needs more time to develop and I think it’s not enough six months or one year to improve my language. I’m talking about myself because I feel I need more, always I need more, especially in this age. It’s not easy.
Asmah’s comments provide insights into the reasons for lack of EL confidence. As she mainly spoke Arabic at home and in social situations, there was little opportunity for her to practice social English. To some extent, limited social interactions in Asmah’s situation are deliberate and self-imposed as her social circle consisted mainly of other Arabic speakers. However, she also made the point that language skills are developmental and require time, but can be hindered by age. These limitations were difficult for Asmah to overcome. In contrast, Asmah described her ability to participate in classroom discussions which she was able to prepare for:

> Because it’s my major, so I can understand and participate and discuss with them about some concepts or some ideas about interior design. Before the day of discussion I can read it to understand what’s the material about.

Being able to prepare herself for the ensuing discussion provided Asmah with confidence to participate actively in classroom discussions. The difficulties associated with knowledge transfer from one environment to another were evident in Asmah’s comments. She is knowledgeable and able to prepare for classroom discussions so she is able to participate more actively in classroom discussions, but the spontaneity of the sociocultural environment is perceived as challenging.

APC participants’ challenges in the sociocultural environment also related to colloquial language. For example, Abdul mentioned he had difficulty understanding the local accent and slang expressions which made it challenging to operate in the social context. Abdul mentioned his discomfort with speaking up in both class and social settings as he lacked sociocultural knowledge of EL. Akbar explained his lack of confidence when speaking to native speakers, “When I sit in front of an Australian or sit in front of [anyone] who knows better English than me I forgot everything. But when I go, for example, to Kuala Lumpur I can speak very much better”. Akbar’s higher levels of confidence in Kuala Lumpur show his perception of a safer environment as he was speaking to similar second language speakers. These comments indicate the possible anxiety levels of participants in situations which they perceive to be potentially embarrassing for them, adversely affecting their confidence levels. As Akbar explained, there is “loss of confidence because you think everything is wrong”. Akbar’s lack of confidence and issues of EL proficiency inhibited him significantly.

APC participants’ responses indicated fear of judgement and ridicule. For example, Akbar explained his reasons for not participating in student associations and mentioned
that he was afraid that he would say “something ridiculous” because his “English is not good”. In his experience, while “Australians are friendly and educated”, they laugh at him when he speaks. Consequently, Akbar commented, “I prefer not to talk”. Akbar also explained: “Maybe because of Australian accent, maybe when you talk to the person who speak English very well you lost your confidence because you think everything is wrong”. Similarly, Miriam emphasised that she would much rather not speak than be judged an ineffectual speaker. Miriam described her difficulties with expressing herself and her fear of embarrassment: “You just hope you can jump to the words because you are afraid if they are going to judge me, the way I’m speaking, my accent, my language, my grammar, lots of things”. Consequently, Miriam preferred to socialise with those who she felt would understand her better where there was less likelihood of judgement. Minah put forward a similar view as she explained that speaking with other ISs was less challenging than conversing with local Australian speakers. She commented, “If there are two guys maybe from international, I understand them. For example, Iranian and Indonesian talking I can contact with them, can catch their accents”. Habib explained that making mistakes was embarrassing for him as it “was under his expectation” and he had let himself down in some way. APC participant comments indicated reticence to socialise with local students as they lacked EL competence and feared judgement.

CHC participants also highlighted the differences between academic and social English. Wayne explained the need to improve “daily speaking” which is “totally different to what he learnt from English courses”. Wayne’s comment was in relation to idiomatic language used in Australian English which makes a phrase like “What are you up to today?” difficult to comprehend from a strictly grammatical point of view. Harry explained the importance of understanding context in spoken situations. He noted, “the vocab used in studying is a bit different than what you would normally use … although they are both English basically”. Sabrina was often misunderstood due to her poor pronunciation, which explains her loss of confidence and reticence in socialising with local students. CHC participants faced challenges in sociocultural adjustments, as differences exist between language usage in social settings and the classroom environment. Issues included accents, colloquial expressions, vocabulary and the social aspects of EL. These aspects of language as used in the classroom and the wider society provide some explanation of cultural gaps in communication.
CHC participants’ social circles were also limited, as they feared judgement and embarrassment in interacting with local Australians. For example, Alice described her discomfort with speaking to local students. Alice preferred the company of other ISs not only because there was less fear of judgement but, more importantly, being with bilingual Singaporean speakers allowed her to speak English with the security of knowing that she could revert to Chinese if the conversation got too complicated. In her view, Singaporeans are fluent in both English and Chinese, which made her confident in socialising with them both in classroom and social settings. In some cases it appears that ISs social circles are limited due to their preference to mingle with other ISs of similar nationalities, which was perceived as a safer environment with less fear of judgement and embarrassment.

Both APC and CHC participants’ comments stressed ISs’ social circles tend to be limited, consisting mainly of other students from similar ethnic groups or other ISs from different countries. Participants experienced difficulties related to EL, which included differences between academic and social contexts, Australian accents and rapid speech rates, Australian colloquialisms, and fear of judgement and ridicule. Rarely do ISs’ circles consist of domestic students, which would enable better cultural integration by allowing opportunities for further practice in social English. While this is self-imposed on the part of the participants, as some of them had received invitations to attend local student gatherings, it is often due to a lack of confidence and a fear of judgement as maintaining ‘face’ is important in the home cultures of these students.

**Lack of Sociocultural Competence**

Another reason for participants’ lack of engagement in EL settings was lack of sociocultural competence. Akbar highlighted the difficulties he faced in communication, which is associated with a lack of cultural knowledge: “If an international student have problem, it’s because of the English. I don’t know the culture of here because I didn’t live in Australia, because I don’t know anything about life here”. Habib presented a similar view:

It’s not the English language. It’s the society language, how they deal with problems. To explain more when I was practicing interior design like there’s a language, the well-known language between people, like the carpenter has special phrase. They can understand it immediately. But the regular person won't understand it. Even every school, every profession had its own language, every society has its own language.
Habib provided an example of the influence of culture on language in the context of sharing jokes:

If I want to tell a joke from my culture to any of my colleague they will not understand it. They just stare at me, is it finished, what's that? If I heard any of the joke in the radio I cannot understand it while the regular person who live along the culture in Australia … can understand this joke.

Habib’s comments indicate that joke sharing is dependent on cultural context, illustrating the link between culture and language. Habib explained that lack of sociocultural knowledge is aggravated by different ways of thinking:

You know the problem is not just the language. The problem is how do you think, the way of thinking, the influence of culture. For example, the influence of culture, sometimes even when you are writing, the style of your writing, the English style or the Australian style is go direct to your goal. In my culture you have to do an introduction because we thought that is impolite to go to your target straight and even with same with communication.

Minah made a similar contrast in the thinking methods of the home and host culture by emphasising that “the thinking is very different”. Culturally different ways of thinking and communicating are apparent in APC participants’ comments. This has implications for how ISs interact with Australian speakers, who would most likely find the approach adopted by ISs to be circuitous and even verbose.

APC participants’ ability to participate in social conversations was limited by lack of common understandings. Asmah described her inability to interact with locals due to an inability to comprehend sociocultural language:

When we sit together and speak I didn't understand the local language. I have a general meaning and then I communicate with people, but sometimes I find difficulty. They thought that I understand but I can't. It’s difficult, at least general things is difficult.

Asmah lacks understanding of the “local language”, a euphemism for sociocultural language, which limited her social interactions. Minah explained that lack of familiar experiences and exposure limited her ability to extend her social network: “For example, two guys talking about action film. I hadn’t seen it, experienced something like that and I haven’t understand about this film so I can’t understand what [their] … point of view or about this”. Similarly, Eliza explained that although she obtained a high level score in the IELTS speaking category, she was unable to participate in social situations due to lack of sociocultural knowledge. She commented, “[W]hen you are coming in society it’s social speaking, it is not English, it is not something that I learnt
before”. Participants were limited by lack of sociocultural language and unfamiliar cultural experiences in accessing and extending social networks. Thus, the sociocultural nuances of language impeded participants’ ability to engage in social conversations.

Similar to the APC participants, CHC participants explained their inability to cope with the demands of the sociocultural environment. For example, Susan explained differences in cultural thinking: “I think it’s how to express our ideas or maybe how to express your thinking. ‘Cos it’s different cultures”. Susan’s inability to articulate herself appeared to impede communication with local students. Differences in thinking, exacerbated by a lack of sociocultural knowledge limited ISs’ interactions with local students. Similarly, Jacinta’s comments show that lack of cultural knowledge posed difficulties in the adjustment experience: “I had some difficulty in understanding ... I think that’s not only because of the language, it’s also a part of the knowledge thing”. Jacinta’s reference to “knowledge” implies the need for ISs to build sociocultural competence.

CHC participants’ formal, academic understanding of EL did not prepare them sufficiently for the host sociocultural environment. Harry explained the inadequacy of formal EL training as he said his knowledge was only sufficient for “studying purposes”. Harry explained the difference between formal and social EL:

Because the wordings and vocab[ulary] used in studying is a bit different than what you would normally [use] in Australia. Because while you are going out you use different type of language, but when you are learning you use another kind of language.

Harry’s comments highlight that his EL skills are inadequate for understanding the sociocultural context, which is dependent on understanding both the language and sociocultural context. Serena articulated a similar sentiment:

I found academic language has more rules, it’s easy to follow. But the social language is too broad, it’s really broad. Sometimes when I talk with them, when they talk about engineering or also, like sport, I have no idea about the vocabulary. Social language - I think that’s the problem.

Serena highlighted that conversation topics are limited primarily due to perceived inadequacies in sociocultural language.

The differences between academic and sociocultural language posed significant issues for both APC and CHC participants as they lacked cultural competence inherent in language. Both groups are aware of the interconnectedness between language and
culture but are severely disadvantaged as they are unable to learn about the culture due to limited language opportunities outside of the immediate classroom learning environment. Participants’ comments articulated ISs’ perspectives of social interaction, the intimate connection between language and culture, as well as having to suspend their original beliefs in so far as it is perceived to be a hindrance in adaptation and sociocultural adjustments.

Limitations and Restrictions of Social Interactions

APC and CHC participants explained that opportunities to socialise were limited due to pressures for academic achievement, age and family context. Additionally, APC participants of Muslim heritage explained restrictions placed by religious requirements, which limited socialising opportunities, while CHC participants found certain sociocultural conventions such as alcohol consumption difficult to navigate.

APC participants, most of whom were mature-age married students with family responsibilities, commented on the limitations associated with social interactions. For example Habib, who is in his forties, mentioned, “My social life mainly with my colleagues and the university”. Habib’s personal situation of having a pregnant wife and young children with him in Australia posed certain difficulties as he had to assist with housework and child-minding. Similarly, Asmah, a 40-year old who is married with children, had significant family responsibilities:

I always tend to look after my kids. I feel that those need me because they are small. The kids take my time. I have no time to socialise because I should go back to my house specifically at five or four o’clock after I finish my study of PhD here. My husband start[s] his work at 6pm until 6am so I should stay with my kids. I don’t have time to join with any clubs or other students.

As Asmah alternated parental responsibilities with her husband, she had limited time available for participation in social activities. Mature-age APC participants with family responsibilities had limited opportunities for social interactions.

Time constraints on participants prevented participation in university clubs. For example, Abdul, in his late thirties, stated that he was unable to join any student clubs: “I have no time … I don’t get any opportunity to go there [clubs]”. Miriam, a late-twenties, single female provided a similar reason: “Actually I am not free … I am so busy since I started my postgraduate course so I have no time”. Eliza, a single female in
mid-twenties, was unable to join social organisations due to pressures to complete a registration test in addition to the normal studying pressures: “I want to study for my exams, for my medical exam. I don’t have time to join any social programs”. As shown in APC participants’ comments, focus on academic achievements and time constraints significantly influenced participant ability to participate in university-wide social events. However, participants’ disinclination to participate in the social life of the university may also have its roots in lack of confidence and fear of judgment due to EL issues and lack of sociocultural competence.

Social interaction opportunities for APC participants were limited due to religious restrictions. Habib mentioned that it was difficult to socialise with non-Muslims because “[I]t [is] the religion thing. If you want to socialise with people you have to respect their habits and part of it is I can’t eat specific kind of meat … pork meat is forbidden and even alcohol is forbidden”. Similarly, Asmah explained:

> For example if I join with from Christian or Hindus or another religion you know you have special food so we can’t eat pork, just vegetarian or Halal food … I think it’s not good to impose the people to eat the same food like us. Also, if I go to social clubs always the people I think they are drink alcohol and as you know I’m Muslim and some Muslims drink also, but because I wear hijab so I should respect my religion.

As a traditional Muslim woman wearing the hijab, a physical manifestation of religious affiliations, Asmah found that she was restricted socially; not necessarily by society but because of personal choices. Minah echoed similar sentiments:

> Being a Muslim woman, I must behave like a Muslim woman. A relationship or talking or hand or touch something I didn't do that, I didn't accept it. So for example if they go to picnic and there is a kind of close relationship for me I don't accept it and I don't want to change. I believe in this.

Minah believed that traditional Muslim women wearing the hijab have to abide by certain expectations as it is an instrumental aspect of their personal and cultural identity. As both Asmah and Minah abide by religious expectations, they chose to limit social interactions; it was easier to socialise with others from similar cultures.

Similar to APC participants, CHC participants were reticent towards social activities. CHC participants were single and mostly younger than APC participants. CHC participants’ reasons for non-participation in social activities had a different dimension to that of APC participants. CHC participants’ upbringing with an academic-achievement focus made socialisation a low priority. For example, Edna’s entire focus
was on achieving high levels of academic achievement due to family expectations. She stated, “I focus only on my study. I must do well”. Focus on academic achievement appears to be a value instilled into CHC people from a young age. As Jacinta explained:

We always studied in China. Our parents and our teachers always say they want us to study, nothing else. They make us feel [that] play with other people or join into other social life too much, it’s not good, it will disrupt your concentration and it will make your study not that good compared to other students … I think its gaps in culture.

Jacinta’s comments provide an insight into the motivation of CHC students who have been brought up to believe that engaging in social activities is disruptive to achieving high academic goals. In Jacinta’s view, cultural differences resulted in a greater focus on studies with socialisation being viewed as an obstacle to achieving academic success. As presented in Proposition 3, family pressures and expectations pressured participants to succeed academically, explaining their internalised extrinsic motivation. This mindset explains ISs’ perceptions of academic and sociocultural environments. Participants made concerted efforts to make academic adjustments, but a similar attitude was not apparent in adjusting to the sociocultural environment.

CHC participants also described time and financial constraints as limiting participation in social activities and clubs. Alice articulated her discomfort with participating in university-wide social activities, as she had no one to go with: “No one asked me to do something, no one, no one. I don’t want to go some place by myself”. Similarly, Harry explained that he did not participate due to time constraints and clashes: “Because I find that the time they chose is quite strange, usually clash with my other commitments and other activities”. Serena made a similar comment, “Like international students we do need to put my [more] effort, spend more time if we want to get the same level of our study. Simple sometimes I just don’t have time”. As CHC participants were focused on study, this limited the time available for socialisation. As highlighted in Proposition 3, financial issues were a major concern for participants. Wayne highlighted a financial limitation: “Money is a problem to join social clubs. I don’t think they’ve got enough money especially for international students. I don’t [have enough money]”. The financial costs of social activities can be considerable and for ISs who generally tend to be on a strict budget, social activities are viewed as unnecessary indulgences.

Alcohol consumption was a reason also mentioned by one CHC student. Serena noted, “I find Aussies, they really like parties or drinking and for me that’s not comfortable.
The cultural things were really different. Sometimes they're getting crazy drunk”. Even though Serena does not belong to a religion which forbids alcohol consumption, her cultural values and personal beliefs made her uncomfortable in participating in the Australian alcohol consumption culture.

Some CHC participants found sociocultural adaptation particularly challenging and experienced social isolation. Edna emphasised that there are only two points in her life, home and the university with little time left for socialising other than through virtual networks. Edna’s social isolation is apparent as she stated “only me in Australia” as it is “not easy for me to make friends”. Jacinta emphasised lack of “knowledge” or understanding of the cultural context made her suffer from culture shock leading to social isolation. She stated “gaps” in culture made it “difficult to join the social life here”. Jacinta had considerable difficulties adjusting to the host environment as she suffered from culture shock, especially in the first semester, as she experienced homesickness and a lack of friends:

I feel I was very bad and that shocked me and there was some different habit with other people and make me difficult in getting into the main part of my own class and I had no friends. I have only two friends, one is from Japan and one is from Korea and they don’t help a lot really because actually we don’t talk. Because of that … I don’t know why actually, I just feel quite uncomfortable and feel lonely.

Jacinta’s comments highlight the link between culture shock and social isolation. Limited opportunities for social activities and social isolation indicate that some participants had substantial cross-cultural adjustment issues. Thus, their social life was limited to virtual social networks; physical social networks were perceived as being disruptive to their studies as they were academic-achievement oriented, leading to social isolation.

APC and CHC participants’ perceptions of the host social environment show discomfort with aspects of the culture which clashed with their personal beliefs and values. They preferred not to socialise with local Australian students, demonstrating a ‘them’ and ‘us’ mentality. These findings indicate that, regardless of age and family context, ISs have exercised personal choices which posed significant hurdles in extending social circles. Participants demonstrated a strong disinclination to participate in university-wide social clubs and events as they were focussed on academic success. Further, participants perceived themselves as lacking both in EL proficiency and sociocultural competence,
which may have prevented them from accessing the university’s social events and opportunities, thus limiting their social interactions significantly.

**Lack of hospitality**

One of the difficulties faced by participants in extending social networks was perceived lack of hospitality. Most APC participants perceived local students as generally inhospitable although some had received social invitations which they declined based on religious and cultural beliefs. Jaffar explained that relationships with local students tend to be superficial which indicates a perception of lack of hospitality, as the only contact is when group assignments have to be completed:

> So once we finish our business, as long we finished our study, our group assignment, that's it. Basically maybe we will finish this unit the next day or the next semester she or he [local students] will pass by you or I will pass by her or him and we will never say, ‘Hi’. It's just something like people they're so careful about friendship.

Jaffar highlighted the transient nature of IS-domestic student relationships and that forming meaningful friendships were challenging. Minah conveyed a similar point of view: “There’s no deep relationship”. In Akbar’s view, there is a lack of understanding: “Australian people, it’s unconscious, Australian people cannot support or cannot understand international people especially who are Muslims”. APC participants perceived the prevalence of a ‘them’ and ‘us’ mentality, which prevented the forging of strong, meaningful relationships.

Similarly, CHC participants explained their perceptions of domestic students as being unwelcoming. For example, Alice identified a few barriers in communication between international and local students including the lack of knowledge of “cultural background”. In her view, local students “treat people in a different way” and it is “hard to make friends with white people” as there is a lack of interest from local students to socialise outside of the classroom. Sabrina emphasised that while ISs are willing to engage socially with domestic students, there is a lack of reciprocation, as domestic students appear unwilling to accept ISs as their counterparts. These findings indicate that barriers exist between IS and domestic students in regards to forming meaningful friendships.
Summary of Sub-Proposition 4.1

APC and CHC participants’ feedback indicate some of the key challenges they encountered in navigating the demands of the host sociocultural environment. The underlying cause of these challenges is related to lack of EL proficiency in a social context. As such, participants explained their lack of sociocultural competence which made them fear embarrassment and judgement. In addition, participants’ opportunities for social interactions were limited by their age, family context, time constraints, religious and cultural inhibitions as well as perceived and real lack of hospitality from domestic students. Consequently, participants’ social circles were limited with some experiencing social isolation. The different experiences cited by the participants provide insights into the difficulties faced by ISs as they attempt to navigate the wider social world of the host country.

Sub-Proposition 4.2: Sociocultural Coping Strategies
ISs developed a range of sociocultural coping strategies from social isolation to constructing cultural enclaves and engagement in voluntary or paid work.

Proposition 4.1 highlighted the key sociocultural challenges faced by participants. Their social circles tended to be very limited, as were the opportunities for successful adjustment into the host culture. Participants’ responses indicated awareness of existence of cultural gaps, yet also show recognition that socialising is an instrumental aspect of their lives in Australia as students. Participants responded to their social needs differently with some being more successful than others. In some cases, the inability to enter the wider, local Australian society led to the replication of home communities in Australia while others experienced social isolation. In other cases, where there had been a higher degree of success, participants engaged in volunteer/paid work as a means of addressing cultural gaps, as there was acceptance of personal responsibility for sociocultural adaptation. The findings in this section are reported under the subheadings of replication of home communities, socialising with other ISs, acceptance and openness, and paid/volunteer work.

Replication of home communities

One of the sociocultural coping strategies adopted by APC participants was to create social communities with students of similar ethnicities. Due to language and cultural barriers, as well as to provide a welcoming environment for new arrivals from their home communities, Parvez and Jaffar formed networks to cater specifically to the needs
of prospective students from their home communities. Parvez formed the Persian Students Club to provide support for new student arrivals based on his initial personal experiences. He explained:

I start to create a community in here, it’s called Persians In [City] … offering support for someone who’s coming from Persia so that they don’t feel lonely and friendless. The education agent, he called me and said, ‘Look, there’s someone coming, he’s a very good guy, he needs your support.’ And I go to airport to pick him and explain things: this is fast food for instance, this is the city centre and this is the university. It was basic.

Similarly, Jaffar provided support for the Saudi students in his community by providing an extended familial support system, typical of his culture which he described as being close knit and very “social”:

One of the differences is, for example, we are very social people, we like to have a lot of social gathering which is very difficult to find it here in the Australian people where when I’m living. If you see how many Saudi people visited me it’s almost maybe 50 times more than other neighbours. Many people visit me every Saturday family gathering, around 15-20 family, we go to [the] River, we go to [the] Park, everywhere. So we are social people even in the uni, even every day my wife she go over to friends in the park next to us. We have about seven families, almost [in] walking distance.

Jaffar formed a group of 15-20 families who gathered together on weekends and holidays for socialising purposes. Jaffar explained further:

Well, it’s essential [to have Saudi friends] because like you are Australian and you come over here to Saudi Arabia and then start to meet a community of Australian people. The first thing you feel like homesick and if it’s your own culture and if it’s your own country and then you start to. That's basically the natural thing that happened … you always go into your species, if you allow me to explain it in that way. It's just something, like you feel comfortable with that because I think first of all the language is very important thing for the communication. It's one of the major parts of communication. I can explain a lot of things in English, but I cannot explain things in English like the way I explain it in Arabic. It's more easier for me to explain it … we have the Saudi Club in [Australian city name] and culturally we are more socialised, more than the Australian culture to socialise.

As indicated in Jaffar’s comments, language and ease of communication were very important considerations in forming friendships as they “know each [other’s] culture”. Thus, his response was to replicate the Saudi home community to enable both him and others in his community to cope with a new sociocultural environment. Miriam explained that Saudi culture focussed on community building which was replicated in the host culture “because we come from a very big family and gathering is the most important thing”. Both Parvez and Jaffar provided social mechanisms for their student
communities by recreating and replicating versions of their home cultural environments. This eased new arrivals’ social adjustments. However, this is not authentic adjustment as they have not adjusted to the wider Australian culture but recreated their home cultures in order to manage in the new, unfamiliar environment.

Participants’ preference to associate with members of similar ethnicities can be understood as the need for cultural comfort which was satisfied through the replication of home communities. Abdul noted that language and cultural similarities are important in establishing high levels of comfort:

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<th>Researcher</th>
<th>What about your friends, who do you mix around with usually, like your friends outside of class?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abdul</td>
<td>My friends from Saudi. All Saudi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>Why all from Saudi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul</td>
<td>Because they are from my country, they are speaking same language and have the same customs and everything. Makes me feel good ... comfortable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abdul highlighted cultural differences when he stated, “[I]t’s hard to take culture from here. We have our own culture and you know our culture is different”. Similarly, Parvez highlighted that language plays an instrumental part in socialisation: “When I saw Iranian here I was very happy when I see someone I can … communicate with the language other than English language”. Asmah also noted, “My office [has] me and one Iraqi and he speaks Arabic language so I feel it’s okay [to talk to him] because I have time to arrange my idea, to arrange my grammar”. She reiterated that different cultural norms made it difficult for her to socialise with the host culture because it is “different culture”, so her preference was to socialise with other Iraqis: “Sometimes I can enjoy the weekend with my friends from Iraq also. We go to parks or beach”. APC participant comments illustrate that they felt more comfortable socialising with others of similar language and culture.

APC participants’ comments indicated that replicating social communities of their own cultures and socialising with others of the same ethnicity allowed them to return to a comfortable sociocultural environment. The sociocultural coping strategy of replicating home communities was evident only among the APC participants and was not mentioned among the CHC participants. APC participants appear to come from a fairly homogenous culture with commonalities in religion and are a smaller community
compared to CHC participants, which may explain APC replication of home communities.

Socialising with other ISs

Another sociocultural strategy adopted by participants was to socialise with other ISs. This was evident in both APC and CHC participant comments. Miriam, a young single KSA female, stated she made friends with other ISs: “I have a lot of friends … Asians and Arabs”. Similarly, Habib explained that socialising with other ISs occurred naturally as he was surrounded by them in a specially designed postgraduate research student space:

The people who more around you is the majority is international student and you have some information about different culture … I never dreamed in my life that I will know something about the Indonesian people or people from other part[s of the world], especially the people from Iran. We had war with them for eight years, eight months and there is a high fatalities and you don't know these people. Suddenly you live with them, they become your close friend, they help you a lot and you realise what a ridiculous joke that happened to you because of the madness of some politician leaders.

Minah mentioned that her friends were mainly from the postgraduate research space: “My friends are Iraqis in the [common working space], many Iraqis and Indonesian and one German”. As research students work in cubicles in a common working area, they naturally socialise with other ISs with whom they build understandings and friendships. However, these friendships did not extend to socialising outside of the university environment as participants preferred to socialise with those of their own or similar ethnicity.

Similarly, CHC participants built social networks, mainly with other Asian ISs. For example, Alice’s coping strategy was to build a network of friends with other ISs, “I got some friends, you know, we get together, we share the rooms … Vietnamese and Singaporean, I mean no local friends”. Alice felt more comfortable with Malaysians and Singaporeans based on similarities of EL proficiency: “I really like them … they are bilingual … they can speak Chinese fluently and English fluently”. In addition, Alice also socialises with other Chinese students with whom she plays badminton or goes fishing. Alice’s comments indicates she felt comfortable, safe and had less fear of judgement when socialising with Chinese or bilingual ISs. Serena conveyed similar ideas: “I had few friends from Saudi Arabia because we are all international students”.

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Susan also said she had made friends with other ISs: “I made friends with international students”. Wayne stated that although he made friends with some domestic students, it was only for completion of assignments. When it came to social activities, he preferred to be with Chinese or other ISs. Findings from the CHC participants show their preference to socialise with other ISs.

Both APC and CHC participants built social groups based on their home communities and/or created social networks with other ISs. While APC participants replicated the social groups of their home communities and also socialised with other ISs, CHC participants were observed to have utilised only the latter strategy. APC participants were able to create social enclaves and replicate their home communities. Unlike the APC participants, the majority of whom were older and married with children, CHC participants were younger and single. This difference may have played a part in exploring friendships with other nationalities but did not extend to domestic students due to lack of social English. Additionally, the food and alcohol restrictions placed on those of the Islamic faith makes it more comfortable for APC participants to be with others of similar values and religious practices. CHC participants experienced discomfort with the alcohol consumption culture in Australia.

Acceptance and Openness

Some participant comments indicate acceptance and openness to change in the host environment, which is in contrast to those who made little attempt to learn more about the host sociocultural environment. For example, Jaffar explained that having an open attitude enabled him to develop relationships:

> Being open to having a different life and different culture … different thinking actually and different perspective about seeing things. People, they always talk about things from their point of view and you talk about things from your point of view. Especially when we’re talking about this stuff, what's going on in the Middle East and what’s going in the war. That makes people more interesting to understand you or you understand it. So if you start to accept people about the point and start to persuade them about the reality, and they start to persuade you about the reality, and you have a good point and good understanding about each other and that means you are adapting socially, and you are cool with them.

Studying in the host environment opened up different opportunities for ISs to build friendships with diverse groups of people. Having an open attitude enabled Jaffar not only to embrace different perspectives but also to develop deeper personal
understandings. Similarly, Habib explained that being open to change enabled him to
grow as an individual:

> When you change your environment you will be influenced by your
> surroundings, especially if you are open. The environment is even how
> your family will adapt to the new environment, how you communicate
> with other people. You get benefit from the people … you learn anything
> from your surrounding. This will influence you even with your reaction
> with how you think.

Habib’s comments indicate the importance of social context and environment in shaping
individuals’ attitudes and ideas. Miriam accepted personal responsibility for
adjustments as she made herself forget about some of the inhibiting aspects of her
culture by not transferring barriers across to the new environment. She said, “I must
forget. Why must I bring those things [from my country] with me here?” Those who do
not isolate themselves socially and are both open and accept personal responsibility
should eventually experience sociocultural adjustments.

Similar attitudes of openness were apparent in CHC participants’ comments. For
example, Wayne took responsibility for making himself understood. This involved
“speaking slowly”, grasping opportunities to chat with others both in class and outside,
and “to not nod our head when you don’t understand”. Wayne’s comments show his
attempts to make himself understood so that he can get his message across. Harry’s
comments indicate his use of the classroom environment and peers to improve himself
by seeking mutual understanding:

> Because in education course most of my peers are Australians so I’m
> slowly building up my social skills so I find that mostly I’m okay with it.
> I explain to them that I’m not from Australia.

Harry’s personal strategies, which included acknowledging difficulties with
communication, enabled him to improve on socialisation skills. Sabrina’s comments
indicate an openness to the host culture:

> Because when you come here you must learn something about how they
> think, their culture. That is a good opportunity for you to learn more than
> knowledge. You can learn about living the culture for living in here.

The necessity of learning the host culture in order to communicate more effectively is
explained by Sabrina. In her view, ISs who make the decision to study in Australia
should use the opportunity to expand their cultural knowledge so as to function more
successfully in the new environment. However, this can be challenging.
Prior preparedness assisted a few participants with sociocultural adjustments. Both Harry and Akbar stated they had prepared themselves for cultural differences by reading up on the host culture prior to arrival. Harry said that “being prepared” and “having the foresight of what life is like in Australia” assisted him to understand Australian culture. Similarly, Akbar believed the research he did about Australia 2 years prior to his arrival had played an important role in enabling him to understand Australian society.

**Paid and Volunteer Work**

Despite the barriers highlighted in social communication with domestic students, some participants commenced efforts to expand on their cultural knowledge. This is apparent in the volunteer and/or paid work they engaged in, ranging from increasing opportunities for social interactions to extending professional knowledge. For example, Eliza commenced volunteer and part-time work to increase cultural competence. By obtaining some work opportunities, she was able to increase opportunities for speaking in social settings: “Last summer I decided to go to work so I will have more communications, more colleagues, I can speak with them”. Eliza explained her decision to work was in order to increase linguistic competence and build sociocultural competence. Similar reasons motivated Parvez to work at a local café which increased his social circle: “I work in the café, I find so many friends there. I go to social dance, salsa”. Parvez made concerted efforts to socialise both by working and attending social events. Minah obtained a volunteer position at the university library in an effort to learn more about the host culture.

Similarly, CHC participants obtained volunteer work. For example, Susan attempted to obtain more cultural experience. The motivation came from a need to learn about her profession as she was a member of a number of professional organizations which were strongly recommended by her tutors. She joined “The ASA [Archive Society Australia], specific in Australia for archivers and the other the RIMPA [Records and Information Management Professionals Australasia]”. She explained:

> Actually, my lecturer encouraged us to join these kind of social networking activities, so that’s why I join. But I learn a lot from them. We can know more about the current records management system and we can learn more. Actually, I gain experience from the experienced information professionals because they love to share their experience with us. And then sometimes I help them with volunteer work at their [primary] schools.
Susan’s contacts at the professional organisations she was part of enabled her to obtain volunteer work at local schools. Similarly, Wayne organised volunteer work through his personal networks:

> Of course, communication is a very important part in my major. I find it by myself, my classmate introduced me to some nursing home, child care. Now I’m doing volunteer in a nursing home twice a week so I follow an occupational therapist, like his assistant, I just went and got some experience from that and I really find that it helpful.

In certain disciplines where there is a strong communication element, especially where placements are involved, there was an urgent need to obtain the necessary cultural knowledge and experience. Wayne’s motivation to obtain volunteer work was to increase his sociocultural knowledge. However, other participants were constrained by time, family responsibilities and focus on academic achievement. Participants’ feedback indicates an active attempt to build sociocultural competence and learn more about the host culture by engaging in volunteer or paid work.

**Summary of Sub-Proposition 4.2**

Despite the challenges faced by participants in the host sociocultural environment, they developed a range of coping strategies. While replication of home communities was noticed amongst the APC participants, a similar strategy was not observed among the CHC participants. Language and cultural similarities could have influenced APC and CHC participants to associate with those of common ethnicities and with other ISs in general. Some CHC participants found it comfortable to socialise with bilingual Chinese speakers. Participants indicated having an open, accepting attitude which enabled them to embrace a few sociocultural opportunities in the host culture. A few APC and CHC participants, particularly those who were single, engaged in volunteer/paid work to build linguistic competence and sociocultural competence. Mature-age participants with family responsibilities were restricted in their social interactions, which were limited to those they work with in the university setting.

**Summary and Discussion of Proposition 4**

Proposition 4 presented two sub-propositions relating to participants’ perceptions of the challenges they faced in the host sociocultural environment and key coping strategies they developed. Based on participants’ responses, challenges faced were due to lack of sociocultural competence compounded by lack of EL proficiency, particularly social English, which led to fear of judgement. This was aggravated by a perceived lack of
hospitality from local students. Pressure to achieve high levels of academic success and religious/cultural restrictions made it difficult for participants to engage socially with local students. In extreme cases, some participants experienced social isolation. Participants recognised the need for social interactions and support which led to replication of social communities of their home countries, particularly for APC participants. Both APC and CHC participants socialised with ISs of different ethnicities. Some participants accepted personal responsibility for adjustment and engaged in paid/volunteer work to build on sociocultural competence which was facilitated by having an open attitude and acceptance of personal responsibility.

Sociocultural adjustment is “the ability to fit in and to negotiate interactive aspects of the new culture” (Searle & Ward, 1990, p. 450). Sociocultural adjustment, based on the social learning model, is influenced by cross-cultural contact, cultural distance, cross-cultural training, previous cross-cultural experiences and length of residence in the new culture (Searle & Ward, 1990). The findings indicate that participants experienced difficulties in integrating into the host sociocultural environment as social English, with its highly sophisticated cultural nuances, was challenging for them to navigate successfully. The participants’ current situation did not indicate high levels of success in sociocultural adjustment. Participants’ feedback shows their lack of integration into the host community as they appear to be more comfortable in groups which consist of members of similar ethnic identity. This finding is supported by Tajfel (1981) and Tajfel and Turner (1979) who proposed, in their social identity theory, that those who identify more strongly with their in-group are less likely to initiate and maintain contact with members of the out-group. This is due to the role of social categorisation and social comparison in relation to self-esteem, coupled with in-group favouritism and out-group derogation (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Given that the majority of both APC and CHC participants chose to maintain social relations with their in-groups outside of the academic environment highlights their reticence to build social networks which includes the out-group. Participants’ sociocultural identity was firmly within the sphere of their ethnic group, as their in-groups consisted of others with same or similar ethnic identities. This was evident both in participants’ replication of home communities and preference to socialise with other ISs of similar ethnicities such as ISs from Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam. In particular, the APC participants strongly identified with their own ethnic group, which
they appeared to use for self-definition and to avoid social contact with other ethnic groups.

One reason for participants’ decision to socialise with their in-groups could be due to their lack of cultural competence and lack of awareness of social English. Gu, Schweisfurth and Day’s study supports this finding, with the authors arguing that “mastery of the form of English language and an understanding of the ‘hidden’ societal and cultural values and norms attached to the language are equally important” (2010, p. 16). It is the ‘hidden’ aspects of sociocultural English that ISs are unfamiliar with which limits their ability and confidence to function effectively in social settings. ISs’ home cultures emphasise ‘face’ and it is important to be seen as being able to handle oneself effectively. Being in control is important, which is difficult when language is an issue. Lack of control can lead to cultural displacement and social isolation. Participant responses indicate a strong perception of ‘them’ and ‘us’. In effect, ISs study in Australia but only immerse themselves in the culture in so far as it enables the achievement of academic goals. Context is important and possession of sociocultural competence is instrumental in allowing ISs to make the distinctions between social and academic English. Their inability to do so demonstrates their position as the ‘Others’, which has consequences for effective sociocultural adaptation and their ability to widen and access social networks. Based on participants’ version of their sociocultural reality, ISs appear to adopt the perspectives of “sojourners” (Thomson, Rosenthal & Russell, 2006, p. 3), who only need to adapt for essential survival. Thus, ISs are assuming a ‘temporary personality’ or identity.

Similar to Gu et al.’s (2010) study, the findings of this study suggest that ISs tend to form cultural bonds with others of similar ethnic origins. ISs ‘retreat’ into ethnic groups can be explained by their feelings of powerlessness and lack of sense of belonging. In this context, forming friendships with those of similar ethnic origins is a coping mechanism as their social identities are challenged in the host culture due to unfamiliarity with societal values, structures and systems and the associated feelings of “being rejected by, or rejecting, members of the new culture” and the new environment (Oberg cited in Furnham, 2004, p. 17). Lewthwaite’s observation that the “values, attitudes and beliefs between home and host cultures were seen as great and coupled with a sense of loss of the familiar put considerable pressure on the student” (1996, p. 16) are relevant to this study as it provides an insight into participants decision to
remain within their in-groups. The acculturation model proposed by Berry posited two dimensions of acculturation attitudes for sojourners: maintaining their ethnic identity and maintaining ties with host nationals and acting in the “local way” (1989, p. 203). As highlighted in Chapter Three, a taxonomy of four acculturation strategies (separation, integration, assimilation, and marginalisation) were developed from the two dimensions. Based on participant feedback, it appears that they practice the separation strategy as they actively work towards maintaining their original ethnic identity and avoid cross-cultural contact.

Another reason to explain participants’ reticence to engage with the host culture could be fear of embarrassment/judgement. Barriers to effective communication, including verbal and non-verbal language, cultural ignorance and fear of rejection makes cross-cultural communication a distressing and anxious experience for ISs, making within-culture interactions more appealing (Arkoudis et al., 2012). In the social environment of their in-groups, participants obtained emotional and social support to cope with the demands of a new host environment. Thus, they avoided contact with members of the host society which indicates low social self-efficacy (Pintrich, 2003).

The different values and attitudes of the home and host cultures play a significant role in participants’ decisions to socialise primarily with their in-groups. The ‘power distance’ theory developed by Furnham and Bochner (1986) suggests that where great cultural distances exist between cultures, ISs would face greater challenges in cultural adaptation (Ward & Kennedy, 1993) such as that between Australia and participants’ home cultures. The alcohol drinking culture of Western social societies and the lack of consideration shown by some host nationals makes it difficult for ISs to engage in cross-cultural communication (Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006). Alcohol consumption is especially problematic for those of the Islamic faith who face religious restrictions. Participants emphasised the expectation to perform well as they experienced pressures from family as well as sponsorship bodies. This leaves little time for socialising with domestic students who could educate ISs in the cultural norms associated with EL, thus increasing their discourse and confidence levels. Forming social networks with host nationals is a strong predictor of ISs’ positive sociocultural adjustments, despite its stressful nature (Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006). However, the current study indicates participants’ discomfort with socialising with host nationals as they lacked confidence,
feared judgement and were restricted by their personal situation and value systems; a situation aggravated by the perceived lack of hospitality.

Participants’ responses indicate a lack of confidence in extending social networks, which shows inadequacy in social communication competency. Social language competency, as well as sufficient knowledge of the host culture’s history, value and non-verbal norms is lacking in ISs which in turn hinders their acculturation. The participants in the current study tended to socialise mainly with students of similar ethnic origins or with other ISs. Low social self-efficacy equates to lower levels of sociocultural adjustment. Affectively, cross-cultural communication places stress on low self-efficacious individuals, thus making them revert to their in-groups (Vaughan & Hogg, 2014). It can be argued that participants had low levels of sociocultural adjustment due to the lack of cultural competence aggravated by lack of social EL proficiency, low social self-efficacy and their reticence to form social relationships with host nationals.

The ABC model of cultural adaptation, explained in Chapter Three, can be used to describe the degree of participants’ sociocultural adjustments. This dynamic and interactive model views cross-cultural transition as a life-changing adaptive event. During a period of cultural transition, ISs need to develop stress-coping strategies and culturally relevant social skills which involve responses in affect, behaviour and cognition. Participants had a variety of responses to sociocultural adjustments. They identified the various sociocultural challenges they faced which limited their ability to access or extend social networks with host nationals. The majority of participants responded primarily by reverting to their original or similar ethnic groups as a stress-coping strategy. However, some participants attempted to build their cultural competence by engaging in paid/volunteer work and attempting to accept personal responsibility for adapting to the host environment. This indicates attempts to change personal behaviours as these participants were actively attempting to obtain cultural knowledge. It is not possible to comment on the success of this approach, as cultural adaptation occurs over time, but it is reasonable to assume that the dynamism of the ABC approach might indicate higher levels of future sociocultural adjustments.

Possession of sociocultural competence and development of intercultural competence will eventually increase ISs’ social confidence, enabling them to widen their social
networks as they better understand communication patterns of the host culture. The affect response of participants refers to their stress and coping strategy and is primarily psychological. Findings from this study are insufficient to explain the psychological well-being (or lack thereof) of the participants. However, their retreat into social enclaves can be viewed as a stress-coping strategy. Being with members of similar ethnic origins appears to make them comfortable, thereby maintaining self-esteem. Similarly, participants’ responses indicate that they identify most with their ethnic cultures as they appear to practice the separation strategy. This shows that the participants consciously perceive their own culture as a salient feature of their identity which supports the notion of intergroup bias as an important aspect of social identification (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Ward et al., 2001). Based on participant feedback, it can be concluded that the challenges of sociocultural adjustments pose significant stress for ISs causing them to restrict their social networks to those of similar ethnicity.

**Conclusion**

This chapter presented Proposition 4, with two sub-propositions, which explained participants’ perceptions of the sociocultural environment. Lack of cultural competence, implicit in sociocultural discourse, limitations and restrictions of social interactions, and the perceived lack of hospitality were some of the challenges faced by participants.

Participants adopted a range of coping strategies. A key strategy was replicating home communities and socialising with ISs of similar ethnicities. This strategy assists with the need for support and friendship but does not enable enculturation to the host environment. Younger, single participants who engaged in volunteer/paid work were able to build some sociocultural competence, but mature-age ISs with family responsibilities were unable to do this. Some participants accepted responsibility for sociocultural adaptation by having an open attitude towards learning about the new culture.

Findings from this chapter reinforce the multiple complexities involved in learning a language, highlighting how language is embedded in a sociocultural context. The interrelationship between language, culture and discourse is evident in participants’ comments, which emphasised that learning a language is not merely about learning the syntax or phonology but heavily dependent on the sociocultural context and setting. As
such, ISs who belong to the distinct ‘Others’ group, as opposed to the dominant ‘One’, are in a marginalised position where they have to renegotiate their identities so that they can operate in a new, unfamiliar environment. While participants were able to do this in the context of the classroom environment to some extent, they had less success in the sociocultural context. The process of social learning was further compounded by difficulties posed by a lack of EL proficiency, both perceived and real, which appears to be the underlying factor severely limiting the ability of ISs to adapt to the new sociocultural environment.

The following chapter, Chapter Nine, provides the conclusions of the current study and presents a synthesis of the findings.
CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction
The rapid growth of globalisation has inevitably led to the acceleration of internationalisation of the HE sector. It is essential that ISs, who comprise this sector, are understood and their needs identified and managed appropriately. A vast body of literature shows ISs experience significant issues when they commence studying at any Western institution. The current study contributes to an evolving body of literature which views ISs as strongly agentic individuals in a constant process of redefining their identity and who navigate, through personal agency, to the demands of different environments. The dynamism of evolving student identities should be understood and reflected in the systems and attitudes of international HE institutions.

APC and CHC participants’ experiences and perceptions of the host academic and sociocultural environment, and the coping strategies they employed to manage, understand and construct meaning of the new environment, were investigated in this study. Characteristics unique to these participants, studying at a large Australian university, were also described. This final chapter summarises the research and its key findings by answering the research questions, summarising the significance of the research, discussing the implications of the research for policy and practice, presenting the limitations of the research, and making suggestions for further research.

Summary of Study
The current study used a qualitative, interpretivist lens to describe and explore ISs perceptions and experiences in the host (Australian) environment. This was achieved through the use of a single case study research design at a major Australian university which has large IS cohorts. Seventeen participants were recruited from a range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses to provide insights and understanding of the main issues faced by ISs across different courses and disciplines. Nine participants from APCs (three each from KSA, Iraq and Iran) and eight participants from CHCs took part in the study. Of the 17 participants, 10 were female and seven were male. Four of the participants were completing undergraduate degrees, nine were doing postgraduate studies other than a PhD, and four were completing a PhD. Data for the study consisted of transcripts from semi-structured interviews, field notes and documents. Participants
were interviewed twice over a period of 12-17 months (2014-2015) to provide varied perceptions and experiences.

Four propositions and eight sub-propositions were developed to explain participants’ adjustment to studying in a different culture. Three propositions and six sub-propositions emerged to describe participants’ experiences of the academic environment. Proposition 1 focused on the value systems of participants home countries and Australia to provide insights into the wider political and socio-cultural setting which has a direct influence on classroom interactions. Proposition 2 highlighted the challenges faced by participants in the host culture due to a mismatch in expectations as these expectations were derived from learning experiences in their home cultures. Proposition 3 explained participants’ adaptation strategies to cope with the challenges encountered in host cultures. One proposition and two sub-propositions emerged to describe participants’ experiences of the sociocultural environment. Proposition 4 focused on participants’ responses to the sociocultural environment and identified the challenges faced and coping strategies developed.

**Answering the Research Questions**

The overarching research question for this study was:

How do ISs from APCs and CHCs adjust to the academic and sociocultural environment at an Australian university?

In order to answer the overarching question, four guiding questions were developed. Each of these questions are presented and answered by reference to the findings and to the research literature.

**Research Question 1**
What issues are faced by ISs from APCs and CHCs when adjusting to an Australian academic environment? How do the issues identified impact on the ability of these students to cope and meet with Australian academic expectations and demands?

Findings obtained from participants in the current study indicate that issues faced by ISs, especially in the initial stages of their study, stem from perceptions of fundamental differences in the academic cultures of the home and host cultures. These findings can be generalised to ISs to some extent. ISs’ expectations of the Australian academic environment appear to be derived from the wider political and sociocultural context of
their home countries as well as their prior learning experiences. As classrooms are microcosms of the wider society, teachers in high power distance cultures tend to be authoritative, powerful, highly respected individuals. Consequently, students are often in a subordinate position, expecting to be directed and sometimes become passive recipients of knowledge. Therefore, ISs experience challenges when confronted with the Australian low power distance academic setting where the teacher is an egalitarian knowledge facilitator. In this ‘new’ setting, ISs had to make attitudinal changes, develop independent learning skills and engage in collaborative learning. These were made more challenging by lack of EL proficiency. This section outlines the main findings in relation to these issues.

ISs’ expectations of the academic environment appear to have been framed within the broader political, sociocultural environment of their home cultures. The link between the wider environment and classroom is significant and consistent with studies which identify culture as an innate construct which determines identity and behaviours (Ho, 2001; Jin & Cortazzi, 2002; Richardson, 2004; Singh & Doherty, 2008). In the context of APC and CHC learners, the political and religious context assumes further significance and explains the influences these students bring with them into the host culture. It is likely that both APC and CHC participants come from authoritative cultures with high power distance (Hofstede, 2011). In such cultures, authority is generally hierarchical with autocratic governments. The difference found between the APC and CHC participants’ experiences is reflected in the key influences of the sociocultural, political landscape. Islam has a significant influence for APC participants, while Confucianism is one of the key influences for the CHC participants. It is also noteworthy that while binaries appear to exist between the Australian and APC/CHC cultures, these are not absolute as changes are occurring in both APC and CHC societies, encouraging a more nuanced approach to understanding cultural differences.

In the context of APC students, the interconnections between politics and religion significantly influence national culture, which in turn has implications for the roles and expectations of teachers and learners. Participant comments indicate that the derivation of teachers’ authority in APCs is from their position as religious and institutional representatives as well as from their traditional and societal identity. The teachers’ task in these societies would have been to “fill empty minds” of students (Richardson, 2004, p. 433). It must be acknowledged that each of the APC countries has a unique culture
and identity, with Islam as a common denominator. Educational decisions are significantly influenced by religion, placing the teacher in a position of moral and educational authority.

However, there are distinguishing features of these countries that had shaped participants’ outlook and attitudes. For example, both Iran and Iraq have suffered years of war with strong political dictatorships. In particular, the Iraqi participants explained that they were “products of the war” which caused them severe anxiety and paranoia. This fear of authority appears to have been transferred to the academic environment to some extent as most APC participants feared figures of authority, including teachers, which prevented them from being questioning or critical. In contrast, Iranian participants who came from a Shia society and had experienced major revolutions had different perspectives on accepting authorities unquestioningly. Nafisi’s observation that the Iranian revolution had “de culturalised” the society and that the “state [had failed] to superimpose its image on society fully in spite of its use of all the instruments and measures at its disposal” (2001, p. 423) is substantiated in this study. The Iranian participants showed more resentment to authorities and developed questioning and critical skills more readily than other APC participants, although they still encountered challenges in the adjustment process.

The powerful, authoritative nature of the teacher’s role in CHCs, as reflected by participant comments in the current study, is consistent with other studies (Ho, 2001; Jin & Cortazzi, 2002; Kember & Watkins, 2010; Li, 2002; Scollon & Scollon, 2001; Hui et al., 2011; Zhang, 2002). Confucianism, like any other ideology, is an evolving concept. Previous studies, along with participants’ comments in the current study, indicate teacher/student roles in CHCs are considerably influenced by its ideals. Jin and Cortazzi (1998) argue that whether or not Chinese teachers realise it, they are influenced on some level by Confucian attitudes. In the CHC classroom, the virtuoso model of teaching is generally adhered to with a moulding orientation. The role of the teacher appears to be to mould the minds of their students and provide them with academic, cultural and moral knowledge as indicated by participant comments. CHC students perceive their teachers as “the authority, the repository of knowledge” (Ginsberg, 1992, p. 6). The teachers’ superior position determines that students are obedient subordinates (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). In this position, CHC students can have difficulty with an academic culture which demands critical thinking and questioning skills as well as the ability to
participate in classroom discussions. As CHC students appear to come from hierarchical cultures, they might expect a similar relationship to exist in the host environment. Confronted by a flat structure, which assumes equality between teacher and student, CHC students are confused. The findings of this study are consistent with others (for e.g. Biggs, 1996; Ho, 2001; Jin & Cortazzi, 1998; 2002) which concluded that Chinese students are highly influenced by the large power distance inherent in their culture and in their interactions with the teacher.

ISs may undergo a period of displacement as they struggle to understand the academic cultural norms of Australian education. They are confronted by an egalitarian environment in the host academic setting, where personal knowledge discovery is valued. The wider political, sociocultural democratic environment is apparent in the academic environment. Australian academic culture values the rights of the individual and encourages free expression without fear of adverse repercussions. The focus is on learning, where the teacher is a facilitator with preferences for problem-based styles of teaching and learning. Participants indicated that this posed significant challenges for them as they were impeded by lack of academic cultural know-how, compounded by issues of EL proficiency. This finding is supported by other studies (Andrade, 2006; Hellstén, 2002; Ramburuth & McCormick, 2001; Ramsay et al., 1999).

For successful transition into the new learning environment to occur, ISs need to learn the culture of the host institution (Biggs, 1990a, 1990b; McInnis, 2010). It is incumbent on them to learn the ‘rules of the game’ as academic knowledge and implicit disciplinary know-how is unfamiliar and unavailable to them (Goode, 2007). Combined by lack of EL competence, ISs might maintain silence in the classroom. ISs classroom silence is not an indication of a lack of intelligence but evidence of their vulnerability and insecurity caused both by lack of academic cultural know-how and language competence. If ISs can learn the rules of the game and understand Australian academic cultural expectations, they are better placed to contribute to classroom discussions and have enhanced learning experiences. For ISs, adaptation is a process which occurs over time through trial and error rather than through explicit learning, as inherited cultural practices are not easy to alter. To ensure success in international education, it is necessary to understand the “workings of the interplay” (Hellstên, 2002, p. 4) between Western [Australian] academic cultures and the international student body. These
understandings provide insights into ISs’ adaptation processes and can be used to ease transitionary processes.

Participants’ comments indicate recognition that expressing individual opinions is a vital aspect of knowledge discovery in Australia. As knowledge facilitators, teachers in Australia create a free environment, which provides opportunities for students to explore knowledge through an intellectual process. This process involves testing of opinions through discussions and broadening their minds to accept and/or question views presented by others including their teachers. Therefore, ISs have to view teachers in Australia as knowledge facilitators. In this process ISs have to adjust their thinking and understand that knowledge is a negotiated activity between teacher and students.

One of the main challenges generally faced by ISs, especially in the initial stages, is suspending the academic, cultural expectations they bring with them into the host culture. For this to occur, ISs firstly need to understand the change in the academic cultural environment from a high power distance orientation to low power distance. In low power distance settings, teachers are egalitarian, friendly knowledge facilitators. Therefore, students are expected to be autonomous learners engaged in a process of personal knowledge discovery. In this process, they have to exhibit a range of skills which are unfamiliar to them as their prior learning experiences were substantially different and did not prepare them for the Australian classroom. Participants’ comments indicated they eventually recognised the need to learn an entirely new academic culture which involved contributing to classroom discussions, engaging in collaborative learning and thinking, and reflecting critically. In the process of learning and acquiring academic cultural know-how, participants encountered challenges in developing independent learning behaviours and working collaboratively, compounded by lack of EL proficiency.

Participants’ comments indicate that developing independent behaviours posed difficulty. This finding is supported by other studies, most of which focused on ISs in the first year of their degrees (Ellili & Chaffin, 2007; Goode, 2007; Richardson, 2004; Park & Son, 2011). Independent learning is promoted in the egalitarian environment of the host culture. Participants’ prior learning experiences might predispose them to be dependent students. Participants perceived personal knowledge discovery as an inefficient use of time and expressed a preference for teachers in the host environment.
to provide them with the necessary knowledge. Participants’ perceptions, derived from prior learning experiences, was based on their view that the teacher and textbooks are the only legitimate sources of authoritative knowledge. Thus, any knowledge gained through personal research or from peers was not perceived as appropriate or acceptable knowledge.

Independent learning, particularly accepting ownership for their research, was challenging for participants in PhD studies. Participants’ prior experiences as Masters research students in their home cultures set up expectations of dependency on their supervisors. Sources of conflict in the supervisory relationship included a mismatch in expectations and issues of responsibility. Initially, participants faced significant challenges in narrowing research topics, formulating research questions and conducting independent research. They showed a lack of awareness of the supervisory process in Australia. Participants expected the relationship to be close and for the supervisor to assume ownership of the project. Assuming sole ownership of their research and taking responsibility for issues that arose made PhD participants insecure and vulnerable. The student-supervisor relationship was challenging for participants to navigate as they appeared to be accustomed to the apprentice-master model based on their home experiences. Adapting to different forms and styles of supervisory relationships caused stress and anxiety for the participants, which indicated a lack of academic cultural knowledge. These findings are consistent with others, which concluded that sources of conflict in supervisory relationships included lack of openness and different expectations regarding responsibilities (Ottewill & Macfarlane, 2003; Adrian-Taylor, et al., 2007; Wang & Li, 2011).

The study also found that engaging in collaborative learning caused stress and anxiety for participants, especially in the initial stages of their degrees. As participants’ previous learning experiences were based almost solely on individual learning and from the teacher, group learning was a difficult concept for them to accept, compounded by the inherent difficulties involved in collaborative learning and group projects. Collaborative learning includes both classroom discussions and out of class group work. Often, collaborative learning involves a Socratic style of questioning, problem-based learning, case studies, role-plays or critical thinking. These educational strategies were generally not common in ISs’ home academic cultures. Therefore, adapting to an academic
culture which valued peer learning as a legitimate activity required an attitudinal change for participants.

Lack of EL proficiency posed further complications for participants in adapting to collaborative learning, as it involves acquisition of social language competency. These findings are consistent with other studies that identified collaborative learning as an impediment for ISs (Holmes, 2000; Tiong & Yong, 2004). However, scholars differ on the degree of adaptation which occurs among ISs in group work settings. The findings of the current study reflect Wong’s study which challenges and demystifies stereotypes of the Asian learner as having a preference for “spoon-feeding” and teacher-centred methodologies (2004, p. 165). Findings from the participants indicate that, despite facing challenges with collaborative learning, they eventually adjust as they recognise its inherent benefits. The degree of successful adaptation varies from individual to individual as some participants indicated frustrations with completing group projects and equitable delegation of tasks. The findings of the current study substantiate Tiong and Yong’s (2004) study, which found that eventually ISs adapt to informal collaborative learning outside of class, but still remain passive in classroom discussions. Tiong and Yong (2004) attributed student passivity to inadequate language skills, influence of prior learning experiences, underdeveloped interpersonal skills, and differing perceptions on the relevance of group work to learning. ISs’ verbal silence is a result of their personal, contextual and cultural constraints which includes learning preferences, motivation, preparation, cultural heritage, language, face and group dynamics (Wang, 2012). Researchers argue that the values Asian students are brought up with conflict with the essence of cooperative learning, such as shared leadership and face-to-face interaction, and their silence may also be a risk-avoidance strategy (Zhang & Brunton, 2007). Collaborative learning, therefore, poses a challenge for ISs, as shown in the current study and substantiated by other studies.

Findings from the study show that lack of EL competence was a significant challenge for participants, particularly in the context of collaborative learning and fieldwork placements. Participants indicated that their comfort levels were higher in didactic classroom environments, but were challenged when the classroom became dialogical. Participants indicated their prior understandings were mainly teacher-centred academic cultural learning experiences. However, language competence assumes significance in dialogical settings. The main challenges experienced by participants due to lack of EL
competence was a fear of embarrassment and judgement, the rapid and colloquial nature of Australian speech, and the need for longer processing times. These challenges were significantly pronounced in the context of fieldwork placements. Participants were comfortable with content knowledge but were limited due to a lack of sociocultural Australian English, which occurs naturally in group discussions and in fieldwork placements. Despite having achieved the minimum English entry for university by achieving an IELTS score of 6.5, participants expressed inadequacy in expressing themselves as they felt unprepared for the social discourse inherent in collaborative learning settings. Studies have shown IELTS scores do not necessarily indicate better adjustment in the classroom or sociocultural setting (Jin & Cortazzi, 2002). A large body of literature has identified similar issues with ISs who are impeded by lack of language competence in collaborative learning settings (Chan & Rao, 2010; Masgoret & Ward, 2006; Zhang, 2002).

ISs face numerous challenges in the Australian academic setting. These challenges can be a consequence of lack of cultural know-how and prior learning experiences. ISs have to learn the rules of the game for them to navigate the demands of the Australian academic culture, which appears to be fundamentally different to their home cultures. Confronted by a new academic environment, ISs respond individually. Eventually students adapt from being powerless, passive learners in their home cultures to becoming empowered, active learners in the Australian environment. This process of change occurs to varying degrees as a result of students’ recognition that failure to adapt will have adverse repercussions on academic achievement.

**Research Question 2**

What strategies are developed by ISs from APCs and CHCs in adjusting to studying in an Australian university? What reasons are given for using these strategies?

Challenges faced by ISs are overcome in differing degrees by participants’ strong sense of personal agency. It must be recognised that ISs are also individuals who are attempting to enter and succeed in an unfamiliar community of practice. A large body of literature has documented the academic cultural differences between ISs’ home and host cultures and identified stereotypes which govern the thinking of academic staff. Few studies have explored the actual process that ISs undergo to adjust, or acknowledge that ISs adjustment is not just a result of cultural or language factors but also related to
inherently different prior learning experiences. Adaptation occurs over time as relearning a new academic culture is a process involving transformative learning. ISs rebuild their understanding of what works well and what does not in the new environment, thus illustrating their sense of personal agency.

ISs’ adjustment can be understood from a dual perspective; they exhibited internalised extrinsic motivation but also experienced a variety of financial and family pressures. As such, they accepted personal responsibility for their learning which was facilitated by recognising the inherent benefits of Australian academic culture. Pressures and stressors that ISs experienced included fear of losing face, financial pressures, and family and government sponsorship demands. Adjustments were also facilitated through participation on an APP. Based on the findings of the current study, the following stages were identified as participants actively constructed a new identity:

Stage 1 – Recognition of differences in academic cultures  
Stage 2 – Appreciation of benefits of Australian academic culture  
Stage 3 – Identification of desirable behaviours to achieve learning outcomes  
Stage 4 – Development of relevant coping strategies  
Stage 5 – Further engagement with academic culture

The above stages formed a cyclical process as participants continually assessed and determined the success of their approaches, making changes and adjustments accordingly. Participants responded actively as they attempted to navigate their way in the Australian academic environment.

Participants’ recognition of different aspects of Australian academic culture and expectations led them to accepting personal responsibility for their learning, which is intrinsic to internalised extrinsic motivation. Confronted by the Australian academic culture, participants initially felt displaced and confused. However, as they recognised the differences between their prior learning experiences and expectations of the Australian academic environment, they began to identify learning behaviours which would assist in the achievement of learning goals, thus showing a strong sense of personal agency. Gradual adjustment can be seen through participants’ active engagement with the dialogical classroom environment.
Participants recognised the strengths of collaborative learning as it allowed them to explore different perspectives, enabling them to develop their own perspectives on issues. Participants also mentioned that group projects allowed for specialisation of labour as individuals could focus on their strengths, making the end product one of quality. The process of change is gradual and participants learning attitudes showed the development of different strategies. For example, participants’ contributions in classroom discussions varied from individual to individual. Some were able to contribute to wider classroom discussions while others felt comfortable with small group discussions in class, perhaps because of differing levels of confidence and participants’ personality. In completing out-of-class group projects, participants expressed a strong preference to work with other ISs rather than domestic, Australian students. This was due to participants perceiving more commonality with other ISs, who they felt had common goals and motivations. The findings in relation to ISs personal agency and collaborative learning are similar to other studies which identify positive coping and resilient behaviours and the development of a range of strategies (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Singh & Doherty, 2008; Wang, 2012). However, ISs preference to work with other ISs and their reasons in doing so are unique to this study.

Participants’ personal agency was also demonstrated in their willingness to change their thinking styles. As highlighted earlier, participants came from cultures which paid little emphasis or advocated critical thinking. The participants recognised that they needed to develop their critical thinking abilities to ensure the attainment of learning goals. Critical thinking is an example of Western cultural specificity developed largely from ancient Greek philosophy. Critical thinking is a socially constructed concept, a social practice which develops as ISs obtain better understandings of Australian culture. It is a challenging concept for those from APCs and CHCs as these societies value acquisition and accumulation of knowledge rather than a questioning attitude. The focus in the participants’ home cultures was on the group, not the individual. However, the stereotypes of ISs, especially Asian learners, as being unable to develop critical thinking have been disproven in studies (e.g., Hellstén, 2007). Participants’ attitudes indicated that they were both challenged and enthused by the opportunities for critical thinking and reflection. They recognised the need to develop critical thinking habits which are instrumental for success in Australian academic culture.
The APP, which some participants completed prior to commencing their mainstream studies, provided a basic introduction to critical thinking that enabled them to develop their questioning skills. This assisted participants in understanding that a plethora of answers and points of views exist. As participants’ adjustment levels increased, they showed the ability to use argumentative styles of writing and the academic rhetoric necessary for successful goal attainment in the Australian academic culture. Participants were able to do this as they positioned themselves to develop the learning behaviours expected of them, assisted by their experiences on the APP. With positive reinforcements from the teachers and better marks on assessments, participants’ confidence levels increased allowing for further adjustment. Participants understood the research process and demonstrated high levels of research skills as they conducted wide library searches to complete assignments. These findings are substantiated by studies which have documented the advantages of preparatory courses in assisting ISs to bridge the gaps between the academic cultures of home and host cultures (Foster, 2012; Gunawardena & Wilson, 2012; Sawir, 2005; Son & Park, 2014).

In the context of PhD studies, the necessity to accept personal responsibility was evident as participants showed ownership of their projects. Participants’ sense of personal agency enabled them to meet the expectations of a different academic culture. They actively reshaped their initial interpretations of ‘good’ learning behaviours as acquired from their home cultures. They negotiated different identities by positioning themselves in a more powerful position. Participants developed accommodation strategies to empower themselves so as to obtain membership into the new academic community. Acceptance of personal responsibility shows the strong sense of personal agency that the participants possessed. Participants began to change their perspectives on their roles as learners as they developed more active, autonomous learning styles, accepted collaborative learning and developed critical thinking and research skills. These findings are also substantiated in other studies (Tran, 2008; Wang, 2012). As Hellstén stated, the process of adaptation occurs through “trial and error” rather than through explicit learning (2002, p. 8).

Participants encountered challenges initially when confronted with a Western, Socratic style of teaching and learning as different value systems appear to exist between the home and host cultures. The focus on learning, as opposed to the traditional style of teaching, can pose some difficulties for ISs. This finding is consistent with that of other
studies which delineate distinct differences between home cultures, mainly Asian and Western cultures, and identify academic and language issues as being most prominent (Gao & Watkins, 2002; Jin & Cortazzi, 2002; Li, 2003, 2009; Watkins & Biggs, 2001; Zhu 2016). Participant feedback indicates that they undergo a period of confusion and displacement as their cultural identity was developed in high power distance cultures with strong collectivist orientations. Their expectation was for teachers to be powerful, authoritative knowledge-givers. However, participants’ response to the knowledge facilitation role of teachers in the host environment shows both an understanding and an appreciation of the changed environment. This is in keeping with Li’s (2009) study which indicated that challenging old knowledge in order to advance new knowledge was an important goal for the learner. Adaptation and adjustment in the classroom context occurred as individuals reconstituted their identities, although it must be acknowledged that participants indicated differing levels of adaptation.

**Research Question 3**
What issues are faced by ISs from APCs and CHCs when adjusting to the Australian sociocultural environment?

Participants encountered significant issues adapting to the Australian sociocultural environment. Findings from the current study highlight the issues experienced by participants were compounded by a lack of cultural competence as the EL they had learned in their home countries did not prepare them for the cultural nuances implicit in social discourse. Participants feared ridicule and lost confidence to function effectively in social settings with host nationals. EL issues were the underlying factor causing displacement in social settings. Combined with a focus on academic performance, participants viewed socialisation as unnecessary. These findings are substantiated by studies which found that ISs are under immense pressure, due to family expectations and financial pressures, as a consequence of perceived significance of learning success to the family (Li, Chen & Duanmu, 2010).

For some participants, bridging the cultural gaps between Australian culture and their home cultures was difficult. APC participants had religious restrictions which made it difficult for them to interact with host nationals. Islam necessitates the consumption of ‘halal’ food and forbids alcohol consumption, reasons mentioned by APC participants as restricting social encounters. Interactions with host nationals were made further
challenging by perceptions of lack of hospitality. Thus, participants made the personal choice to socialise with co-nationals or other ISs.

The research site for the current study has large numbers of ISs; therefore, participants did not feel the need to develop friendships with Australian host students. Other studies (Smart, Volet & Ang, 2000; Trice 2004; Volet & Ang, 1998; Ward, 2009; Zhang & Brunton, 2007) highlight how friendship patterns with local students were difficult for ISs due to lack of cultural and linguistic competence. The preference to socialise and work on group projects mainly with other ISs can inhibit social interactions as there are limited interactions with host nationals to adjust to local accents (Trice, 2004; Zhou, 2015). ISs gravitated to co-nationals for social and academic support as they found it too challenging to interact with local students.

**Research Question 4**

What strategies are developed by ISs from APCs and CHCs in adjusting to the wider Australian social environment? What reasons are given for using these strategies?

Participants recognised the need to socialise and build social support as social networks are especially important in collectivistic cultures. In order to form social networks, participants replicated the social communities of their home cultures. The formation of co-national social networks was evident, particularly among APC participants. Most CHC participants formed social networks with other ISs from Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam. Participants’ age and marital status appeared to have a significant influence on the type of social networks formed. APC participants who were older, mainly in their thirties and forties, had young children. These participants had a tendency to socialise mainly with co-nationals. On the other hand, the younger CHC participants socialised with other Chinese students but also had strong social networks with other ISs. The findings indicate that participants lack of social confidence limits their ability to extend their social networks, illustrating issues in social communication competency. Findings from the current study show low levels of sociocultural adjustment which is due to a lack of cultural competence aggravated by a lack of social EL proficiency, low social self-efficacy and participant reticence to form social relationships with host nationals.

Participants’ sociocultural adaptation can be viewed through the dynamic and interactive ABC model of cultural adaptation (Ward, et al., 2001; Zhou, 2015) which
views cultural transition as a life-changing adaptive event. Participants’ responses involved affect, behaviour and cognition as they actively identified the sociocultural challenges they encountered and responded to these challenges. The stress-coping strategy used by most participants was to revert to their home groups or create new groups with other ISs from similar cultures. Other studies with ISs (Andrade, 2006; Bradley, 2008; Lee & Rice, 2007; Leong, 2010) have claimed this was to compensate for the loss of established support and social networks. Participants’ cognition responses indicate that they identify most with their ethnic cultures as they appear to practice the separation strategy. This shows that the participants consciously perceived their own culture as a salient feature of their identity, which supports the notion of intergroup bias as an important aspect of social identification (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Ward et al., 2001).

A few of the younger participants engaged in paid or volunteer work to build cultural competence, highlighting how they were attempting to change personal behaviours. In working with host nationals, participants began the process of building social competence and improving their EL competence. Participants’ motivations for engaging in paid/voluntary work were diverse, but appear to be largely intrinsic as it was from a desire to improve themselves. Findings from the study show distinct differences between the older and younger participants. Younger participants, both from APCs and CHCs, accepted personal responsibility and actively tried to build their social and linguistic competence. The success of this approach was not determined from the current study. However, as cultural adaptation occurs over time, it is reasonable to assume that the dynamism of the ABC approach might indicate higher levels of future sociocultural adaptation for those who actively make attempts to learn about the host culture.

Some authors (e.g., Robertson et al., 2006) argue that ISs who maintain social relationships with both co-nationals and host nationals experience lower levels of sociocultural stress. The participants involved in the current study were focused on academic achievement. They were satisfied with the support networks they had formed with other ISs and co-nationals, and they did not feel the need to form friendships with local students. Other participants perceived any friendships which could be formed with host nationals as an added bonus, but not vital to survival in the host country. The focus of the current study was sociocultural adjustment, which is the process of acquiring
social and cultural knowledge; the researcher is unable to comment on psychological adjustments which were not within the scope of the research.

Findings from the current study indicate that ISs make conscious decisions about the strategies they develop both in the academic and sociocultural settings. While they attempt to understand and make adjustments in the academic setting, a similar attitude does not seem to exist in the sociocultural setting. The repercussions of not adapting academically have more severe consequences than not adapting socioculturally. Assistance is provided in the academic setting, by academic staff and university systems, to assist ISs. However, similar scaffolding does not exist for ISs to enable ease of sociocultural adaptation, at times compounded by perceived lack of hospitality and negative attitudes of host nationals.

**Synthesis of Research Questions**

In synthesising the findings from the four research questions, Figure 9.1 presents a diagrammatic representation of the influence of culture, motivations, EL proficiency and gender on the academic and sociocultural adjustment for students from APCs and CHCs. The influence of these four constructs provides insights into the dynamism inherent in ISs’ academic and sociocultural learning and adjustment. Based on the findings from the current study, motivation was the key construct, which determined participants’ approaches and attitudes to the academic and sociocultural environments. As highlighted earlier, ISs’ prior learning experiences predisposed them to bring certain expectations into the host environment. Confronted by significant changes, participants developed coping strategies to ensure successful attainment of learning goals. This shows the active construction of self and the personal agency of participants. The key motivation for participants in bridging gaps caused by misalignment in academic expectations appears to have been due to their learning goals and self-regulation of their learning. In spite of the difficulties encountered and the hindrances caused by lack of EL competence, participants performed well academically as they developed appropriate strategies by exercising personal agency. This finding is substantiated by studies, which indicate that motivation has a positive effect on ISs’ academic performance (for e.g., Andrade, 2006; Hellstén, 2002).
Motivations and culture are placed at the top of the figure as the findings indicated that these were key constructs in determining participants’ responses. The links between motivations, culture and EL proficiency are indicated by the two-directional arrows as each construct influences and is influenced by the other. The two sides of the diagram represent academic culture and the sociocultural environment. On the left side of Figure 9.1, academic adaptation is explained by highlighting facilitating and inhibiting factors. Facilitating factors include internalised extrinsic motivation, acquisition of academic ‘know-how’, clear learning goals, adverse consequences of failure, and fear of loss of face. Gender was an inhibitor for APC females, who sometimes had difficulty with collaborative learning. The facilitating factors played a significant role in the creation of a transient identity to achieve learning goals. The right hand side of Figure 9.1 explains the facilitating and inhibiting factors which led to limited sociocultural adaptation. Contrary to adaptation in the academic environment, the findings indicate more inhibitors and less facilitating factors in sociocultural adaptation. A facilitating factor was the desire to build sociocultural competence, as some participants engaged in either volunteer or paid work. Inhibitors included lack of sociocultural and EL social competence, gender, religion, different cultural practices and participants’ marital status. Thus, participants reverted to building social networks with ISs of similar cultures.
Model of ISs’ Academic and Sociocultural Adjustment

Based on the findings and the conceptual framework adopted in this study, a model of ISs’ academic and sociocultural adaptation has been developed and presented in Figure 9.2. The underlying theories, which inform the derivation of the model, revolve around the theory of personal agency, which along with positioning theory provides an insight into the decision-making process of ISs. As highlighted in Chapter Three (Positioning Theory), the inherent dynamism of social reality allows individuals to either adopt (take up) or reject particular discourses. Thus, ISs are agentic active decision-makers, who are transformative learners as “they construct reality through revisiting their existing assumptions and move towards life-changing developments in their personal and professional perspectives” (Tran, 2012, p. 124).

The model (Figure 9.2) is based on the view that ISs are agentic individuals who actively determine their strategies of adjustment based on context. ISs’ identity of self is distinctly different in the academic and sociocultural environments, represented by the left hand and right hand side of Figure 9.2, respectively. The differences between the home and host cultures influenced participant’s responses. In the academic environment, participants used a range of strategies and developed self-regulated learning behaviours, facilitated by participating in an APP, despite facing challenges in developing independent behaviors both in the context of the classroom and PhD supervisory relationships as well as collaborative learning. To cope with the demands of the Australian academic environment, participants developed a transient identity. In the sociocultural environment, there was a distinction between those who had some success in adaptation and others with limited success. Participants who accepted personal responsibility and engaged in volunteer and/or paid work had partial success in sociocultural adaptation. Other participants had limited sociocultural adaptation as they lacked sociocultural competence and social English, and they experienced (perceived or real) inhospitality. These participants retreated into cultural enclaves, with some participants’ experiencing social isolation in extreme cases.
Figure 9.2 was developed as a tentative model to provide insights into the academic and sociocultural adjustments of ISs based on the findings of the current study and informed by previous studies. Prior research (Fotovatian, 2012; Fotovatian & Miller, 2013; Hellstén, 2008; Klemenčič, 2015; Koehne, 2005; Singh & Doherty, 2008; Tran, 2007; 2008; 2012) advocates that ISs should be viewed as individuals with a strong sense of agency who actively position and reposition themselves in the process of reconfiguring their identity (Gu et al., 2010). Figure 9.2 illustrates the personal agency of participants who made deliberate decisions to develop strategies to adjust to the host academic environment while less effort was evident in their development of strategies to adapt to the sociocultural environment. The model in Figure 9.2 is reflective of three components identified by Tran (2007; 2008) in Chapter Three:—self-positioning, forced self-positioning, and committed adaptation. In the context of the current study, participants exhibited self-positioning and forced self-positioning as they demonstrated committed adaptation (Tran, 2008). Self-positioning is evident as participants exercised personal agency in achieving personal goals; however, forced self-positioning was also evident as participants positioned themselves in an appropriate manner to comply with
the demands of the host academic environment, thus demonstrating committed adaptation.

As participants in the current study did not exhibit hybrid adaptation which refers to the “creation of a hybrid space for meaning making and treating their first language and culture as a resource rather than a hindrance” (Tran, 2011, p. 88), it is possible that the academic identity constructed was a transient one in response to the changed academic expectations in order to achieve learning goals. ISs are transformative learners who renegotiate their identity based on their acknowledgement of pre-existing assumptions. This is illustrated in this current study as participants demonstrated their awareness of the differences in academic cultures between the home and host countries, lending credibility to the notion of the altered academic identity being one of transience (Tran, 2012; Gu et al., 2010). Identity reconstruction is by nature dynamic and malleable to context; as such it can be viewed as “work[s]-in-progress” (Singh & Doherty, 2008, p. 13). The multiplicity of identity as concluded by other scholars is also substantiated in this study as participants constructed two different, context-based identities in the process of self-reinvention (Koehne, 2005). Participants reconfigured their identity and developed a legitimate institutional identity based on transactional and transitional processes (Fotovatian, 2012).

Spindler and Spindler’s (1992) model relating to the enduring self, situated self and the endangered self (presented in Chapter Three) can be applied to Figure 9.2 to explain the development of participants’ academic and sociocultural identity. ISs can be seen as having an enduring self which is their original cultural identity. In the academic environment, some ISs develop their situated self without damaging the enduring self, as shown in Figure 9.2 where ISs developed coping strategies despite facing challenges. Other ISs who experience prolonged stresses in an unfamiliar environment may feel isolated, marginalised and unable to cope, thus endangering the enduring self, leading to the endangered self. However, the endangered self can be repaired through cultural therapy or consciousness-raising. Figure 9.2 shows that most ISs can be perceived as developing the situated self in the academic environment while retaining the enduring self in sociocultural settings, as they tend to revert to home communities, a significant finding of the current study. The process of consciousness-raising is more evident in academic settings than in sociocultural settings. Identity is multifaceted and there would be inevitable overlaps between the two settings. Predominantly, the enduring and
situated self provides insights into the adjustments of ISs. The situated self develops more rapidly due to SRL and SDT which can be applied to meta-cognitive, behavioural and motivational strategies as ISs control their learning processes and actively manage learning outcomes.

Figure 9.2 presents a tentative model to explain the influences on ISs’ adjustments. The diversity and change taking place in APCs and CHCs needs to be considered. National culture characteristics are not absolute but malleable and evolve as society progresses. APCs are in the process of making changes to their education system to develop critical thinking skills; as such these changes may eventually influence the ways individuals from these cultures make adjustments to unfamiliar environments. APC participants in the current study came from a traditional Arabic education system but more recent graduates arriving from these cultures into the Australian education system may have different strategies of adjustments.

**Significant and Original Contribution to Knowledge**

This research makes a significant and original contribution to knowledge in five ways: understanding individual cultural groups of ISs, viewing ISs as strongly agentic individuals, the development of four propositions related to the adjustment issues which ISs face when studying in a foreign environment, issues faced by international PhD students, and the development of a model of ISs’ academic and sociocultural adjustment.

The current study is one of few to present findings of individual cultural groups of ISs, rather than view ISs as a homogeneous group. While there have been a few specific studies on ISs from CHCs, little research has been done into ISs from APCs or Muslim ISs. The current study provides a unique observation of ISs from three APCs (Iran, Iraq and KSA), along with those from CHCs, and how they adjust to the academic and sociocultural environments at an Australian university. While ISs from APCs shared some similarities with those from CHCs, distinct differences based on their home culture’s political, social and religious influences were found. Religion plays an important role in the APC identity, influencing their academic and sociocultural identity. Females from conservative APC cultures experienced difficulties in working with men, especially those from similar cultures. This was not an issue experienced by the CHC females. Findings from the current study indicate that social support exists for
APCs as they created or were part of social communities with others of similar ethnicities. In contrast, CHC participants appeared to experience more social isolation as similar support networks were not evident amongst CHCs. Thus, they relied on friendship networks as opposed to the established networks of APCs. Both cohorts experienced financial pressures but financial repercussions for APC participants on government sponsorships were severe in comparison to CHCs who were family funded. Participants’ upbringing, with a focus on academic achievement, was more evident amongst those from CHCs and only implied in the findings obtained from APCs. The current study has contributed to the literature on ISs’ adjustments by providing insights into two specific ethnic groups.

The findings from the current study reinforced the view of ISs as strongly agentic individuals who respond to new environments in a dynamic manner. ISs were found to experience significant challenges but, as strongly motivated individuals, they developed strategies to overcome the identified challenges. ISs’ strong agency was also shown in their deliberate decision to make adjustments in the academic environment as they are learning goal oriented students. However, a similar attitude was not apparent in making adjustments to the sociocultural environment. Thus, ISs are agentic individuals as they exercised control over their academic and sociocultural environments, as they sought to find meaning within each of these environments.

The four developed propositions provide new insights into ISs’ academic and sociocultural adjustments from being initially culturally dissonant to gradual adjustment to the host environment, primarily in the academic domain. Three of the four propositions related to the academic environment. The first proposition described how ISs develop expectations of the academic context based on their prior learning experiences. As the academic settings of the home and host cultures differ significantly, ISs are initially displaced due to mismatches – the focus of the second proposition. Challenges faced by ISs include learning a new academic culture and building an appropriate ‘know-how’, aggravated by issues of EL proficiency. In particular, it was found that there are links between lack of language competence and fieldwork placements, which is unique to the current study. ISs develop their situated identity to overcome and address the challenges identified as explained in the third proposition. ISs cultivate appropriate learning behaviours in order to achieve their learning goals, governed primarily by internal and external stressors and a strong sense of internalised
extrinsic motivation. The sociocultural environment was the focus of the fourth proposition, highlighting the significant challenges which ISs face. While some of the younger participants attempted to build cultural competence through obtaining paid and/or part-time work, most participants expressed a strong desire to socialise with other ISs of similar descent.

This study also contributes to a small body of growing research into the experiences of international PhD students, of which there were four in the current study, and their struggles during their research studies. While the findings of the current study substantiate those of others that have identified issues of academic writing, EL proficiency, mismatches between students and supervisor expectations, and cross-cultural issues, there was an additional finding which related to the supervisory relationship. This study found that expectations of supervisory relationships were derived from participants’ previous experiences as research students in the home culture.

The Model of ISs’ Academic and Sociocultural Adjustment provides insights into the dynamic, malleable identity construction of ISs. It indicates the personal agency of ISs who make conscious, deliberate decisions to adjust to the academic environment as the consequences of failure are too high. ISs construct a transient identity to adjust to the demands of the unfamiliar academic environment and suspend the expectations developed from their previous learning experiences. The model describes this transient identity as participants revert to their original cultural identity outside of the academic environment, preferring to be with co-nationals or other ISs who represent familiarity and provide them with a safe haven. The identity construction of ISs is part of research which is evolving in order to understand ISs from a discursive perspective. The current study contributes to the literature as it identifies both the academic and sociocultural identity of ISs as important to their adjustments.

**Implications for Practice**

The findings of the current study have implications for policy development and practice at universities. These suggestions are warranted in light of the educational goals articulated in OECD (2017). The document highlights the needs for the eradication of poverty and sustainable development among a few other goals in ensuring parity among different countries. One of the ways to achieve these goals is through a concerted focus
on international education; thus it is imperative that the needs of ISs are carefully considered and addressed to ensure successful educational outcomes so that they can return to their home countries with strategies to make changes that will enable the attainment of equality. This notion was conveyed by some of the participants in the study as well. Given that internationalisation is in its mid-life, many internationalised universities have adopted management approaches that cater specifically to the enhancement of educational experiences for ISs. For example, at the research site of the current study, which is a highly internationalised university, a Learning Centre to assist ISs has been formed. In addition, English diagnostic tests are conducted at the commencement of the first semester of ISs’ studies to determine their EL proficiency levels so that management plans can be constructed to support and assist students who require these interventions. These are innovative changes which have recently been adopted at the research site and the success of these initiatives are yet to be ascertained. The implications in this section have been framed in light of these developments with the aim of further improving the experiences of ISs in Australia.

ISs are highly motivated and attempt to adopt strategies in their navigation of the demands of the host academic environment. However, in attempting to do so, ISs initially struggle to determine the expectations of the new environment. Understanding these expectations at the outset of their overseas study would make the learning experience less stressful. Thus, an implication of this study could be the implementation of a university-wide comprehensive policy which acknowledges the complexity of issues faced by ISs. The policy could establish a detailed pre-departure brochure which outlines the nature of the academic environment and expectations which would supplement pre-departure information on aspects of accommodation and living conditions. Given Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, it is reasonable to assume that ISs would pay greater attention to information on accommodation and living prior to educating themselves on the academic environment.

Induction programs which ISs can participate in on arrival should be developed. These could include workshop sessions which simulate university tutorial sessions. ISs often experience information overload during orientation sessions. Thus, information provided to ISs should be revisited at fixed points during the semester for ease of adjustment. For example, a session on study skills and time management could be held prior to the submission of the first assignment. Similarly, exam expectations and stress
management sessions could be held prior to exams. For these initiatives to take effect, the central arm of universities which oversees matters of learning and teaching must provide leadership by way of implementing a comprehensive adjustment management policy for ISs. As bridging sociocultural gaps is particularly challenging for ISs, social programs aimed at encouraging ISs to leave their ‘comfort zones’ and navigate the Australian social environment should be developed. These could begin with workshops that develop ISs’ confidence and competence to work with host nationals on group projects. Eventually, social circles consisting of host nationals could be created.

Findings from the current study shows that ISs’ adjustment to the host academic and sociocultural environment is complex and requires a nuanced understanding, and that ISs should not be viewed as homogenous groups but understood as culturally distinct communities. The implication of this for practice is that professional development programs targeted towards understanding individual sub-groups of ISs can be developed. These programs should be for staff involved in matters associated with ISs. Academic staff could be provided with strategies to enable engagement between host nationals and ISs to develop better understandings so that the transitional experience for ISs is less challenging. Many academics perceive language problems to be the only issue facing ISs. However, as shown by the current study, ISs also have issues with roles of academics, learning styles and behaviours, collaborative learning, and critical thinking. If academics are aware of these influences, they could then construct a collegial, encouraging, and supportive environment which would ease ISs into the host environment.

Despite the plethora of studies which have been conducted on ISs, there seems to be little change in the policy and curriculum development in HE institutions. An assimilationist approach can still be discerned with undercurrents of a colonial mentality which dictates that the sojourner who chooses to study in an Australian institution must make the necessary changes. Consequently, a more inclusive curriculum, which caters to different academic cultural practices, could be developed. One of the dichotomies involved with exploring ISs’ adaptation processes is the issue of responsibility for learning. Is it the responsibility of ISs to adapt to the host culture? Or should the host culture make allowances for different learning styles and accommodate these in the curriculum? Or both? Australian academics should be aware of ISs’ adaptation processes and the expectations they bring with them into the host environment. These
understandings can then be used to provide sufficient scaffolding and training for ISs. Such an approach would help to mitigate the stresses faced by ISs and make the adjustment process more manageable. It would also lead to a more sustainable approach to internationalisation of the HE sector as ISs would be guided in the process of decoding cultural disciplinary ‘know-how’ as opposed to discovering it through a process of trial and error. As such, culturally synergistic models of transition, which do not privilege one culture over another, need to be developed.

**Limitations of the Research**

The findings of this study were constrained by a number of factors: number of participants, methodology, participants’ EL proficiency, and possible researcher bias.

The number of participants in the study was 17. There were only three participants each from the APC countries of KSA, Iraq and Iran, with the remaining eight being from CHCs. Participants were also from differing courses ranging from undergraduate to doctoral studies. While detailed information was obtained from this small number of participants, other ideas and perspectives could have been obtained from a larger number of participants. Various conclusions have been made about ISs completing their PhD, but these have been based on the views of four participants. Additionally, the participants came from one academic institution in Australia. A larger number of participants from other institutions could have presented different ideas and perspectives.

The qualitative, case study approach utilised in the current study is appropriate as it yielded ‘rich’ data from face-to-face interviews to determine participants’ perspectives. However, a research design involving a quantitative survey may have provided a macro picture. Quantitative instruments, which rank ISs’ adjustments, psychological adjustments and learning styles may have provided additional information to support the qualitative findings.

Participants’ EL proficiency was sometimes an issue as the researcher often had to summarise responses during the interviews to ensure accuracy. At times, EL proficiency issues caused reticence amongst a few participants who were very brief with their responses. The researcher mitigated these by asking probing questions and encouraging elaborations, but it is possible some information may have been lost in this process.
A further limitation of the research is that the data obtained in the current study did not lend itself to studying the impact of participants’ level of education and discipline of study on their ways of making adjustments and connecting with their social and disciplinary environment.

The majority of the participants had completed an APP prior to their mainstream studies. The data might be slightly skewed as the researcher had been the program administrator for the course and had held an authoritative position. It is possible that participants felt obliged only to share positive experiences and may have deliberately omitted negative aspects of the APP. The researcher addressed any issues by assuring participants of confidentiality and her objective status. Each interview began with a clarification of objectives and an assurance that the researcher was conducting the research objectively in a position different to that of leadership of the course. To minimise confusion in roles, the interviews were conducted in other parts of the university rather than the researcher's office.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

The student populations involved in the current study are representative of the larger groups of ISs in Australian HE institutions. While students from CHCs have been studied over decades, students from APCs are largely understudied. Future studies on specific groups of ISs would provide a nuanced understanding of individual cultural frameworks, which would explain the assumptions and expectations ISs bring with them into the host environment. Knowledge of these expectations would assist in minimising stereotypical attitudes towards ISs.

Future research could include both academic and professional staff perspectives of ISs to compare against that of the students. This would provide a holistic understanding of differences, so that conflicts and stereotypes can be minimised. As the current study only focused on ISs’ perspectives, other views must also be researched to provide a thorough understanding.

For a holistic, detailed exploration of ISs’ adaptation process, longitudinal studies across different Australian institutions should be conducted to test the veracity and consistency of the model presented in Figure 9.2. A longitudinal study involving a
larger group of participants would allow interviewing at various times in the adjustment process. These times could be on entry into a mainstream course, midway during the first semester of studies, at the end of the first year of studies, at the end of the second year of studies, and at the end of the final year.

The current study found that PhD students formed close friendships with other PhD students as they were co-located in a large communal working area at the site where the research took place. The PhD communal working area was a recent development at this university and appears to have allowed ISs to establish strong support networks. This was different to the undergraduate students who did not have a common place to gather or meet other students. Future studies could explore the relationship between common student areas and its influence on ISs’ adjustments as a medium to provide opportunities for socialisation, establish positive support networks, and build cultural and linguistic competence.

Gender adjustment is an understudied area that requires further research. It can be assumed that Australian democratic, egalitarian cultural values would influence the attitudes of ISs from traditional, conservative countries which have clearly defined roles for men and women. In particular, APC women in the current study were married with familial responsibilities. This can be viewed as an impediment to adjustment. However, a psychological analysis on their adjustment patterns might reveal further insights into any attitudinal changes that occur which make them question their traditional roles.

The study presented a Model of ISs’ Academic and Sociocultural Adjustment. This model requires further testing and verification to validate the theoretical propositions on which it is based. Given Australia’s large and economically significant international student population in HE institutions, there is a significant research agenda which emanates from developing the model presented in this study. Further research into the model might provide insights into the thought process of ISs who are under immense pressure to make changes in their learning behaviours.

Further research examining the perspectives of ISs after they return to their home countries might provide an additional dimension on whether aspects of their identities have changed by their overseas study experiences. Within the current study, ISs’ academic identity was found to be transient. There is a possibility that aspects of the
identity developed in the Australian academic setting may be transferred to the home environment on ISs’ permanent return to their home countries.

**Researcher’s Reflection**

This section provides details about the researcher and her reflections on the current study as it relates to her professional experience and role. These reflections are necessary as a conclusion, as the information gleaned from the current study has been instrumental in informing the researcher’s current professional duties and provides some preliminary validation of the Model of ISs’ Academic and Sociocultural Adjustment.

In 2014, the researcher was asked to coordinate offshore APPs, located mainly in China. The position involved developing and managing APP style programs with five partner institutions. The program had two components: training of Chinese teachers onshore (Australia) and academic coordination of the course offshore with Chinese students (China). In carrying out the responsibilities associated with the job, the researcher had the unique opportunity to observe the identity construction of the Chinese students in Chinese institutions and the Chinese university teachers she worked with in China.

The researcher was engaged in a constant process of reflection, with the nexus between research and teaching becoming stronger. The researcher was able to translate knowledge gained from the current study to the immediate environs of the classroom. For example, during the input sessions of the teacher-training component, which include a teaching practicum, weekly journals and numerous formal and informal meetings, the researcher observed the development and adaptability of the Chinese teachers she was training. One Chinese teacher aptly described her experiences as being a caterpillar in a cocoon when she first arrived in Australia, but developing wings and becoming a beautiful butterfly as she developed critical thinking and questioning skills. The opportunity to work so closely with three groups of teachers (each group had four to five teachers) over a period of 18 months demonstrated to the researcher the trustworthiness of the findings in the current study. Similar to the study participants, the Chinese teachers’ adjustment and adaptation strategies were apparent as they were keen to make progress in their teaching approaches. They obtained knowledge through observing Australian EL teachers in the classroom at the university’s EL centre, input sessions which covered teaching methodologies, and differences between different
academic cultures and the teaching practicum (microteaching and team teaching). Through the Chinese teachers’ weekly journal reflections, it was evident that their academic teaching identity was developing.

While there was much social contact between the teachers and the researcher, there was limited interaction between the teachers and their Australian co-teachers outside of the work environment. More often than not, they socialised together as a group or with other Chinese nationals, thus retaining their original cultural identity even though they had a friendly relationship with their Australian co-teachers. When questioned about their socialisation habits, the Chinese teachers responded in a similar way to the participants; it was difficult to break into local social circles as they found the Australian teachers had their own exclusive social groups.

As the researcher was actively involved in the Chinese teacher training program while writing up the research, she obtained considerable insights into the thinking styles of individuals from CHCs. The collectivistic, high power distance and authority aspects of Chinese culture were initially very strong amongst the Chinese teachers, but these lessened over the period of the course as they developed ideas about the traditional and contemporary roles of teachers and learners.

The researcher followed up the training with observations of the Chinese teachers conducting lessons in their home institutions (in China). While there was a concerted attempt to be more facilitative and student-centred, there were times when lessons would lapse into the traditional teacher-centred format. However, differences were found between the teachers’ initial teaching behaviours and subsequent teaching approaches after the training. The Model of ISs’ Academic and Sociocultural Adjustment developed in this study is substantiated by the teacher training program conducted by the researcher with Chinese teachers. While this is anecdotal, it lends some preliminary credibility to the model.

The research experience has been invaluable in the researcher’s professional and personal growth. Being able to observe research in practice provided the researcher with insights on human nature, cross-cultural issues and the sheer magnitude of courage it takes for those from non-English speaking backgrounds to undertake studies in their second language. The research experience has made the researcher protective of ISs and
passionate about developing programs which will enhance cross-cultural understandings in the tertiary context. The researcher is also keen on developing programs which will support ISs in their transition from the home to host cultures.

**Conclusion**

This study contributes to an evolving body of literature which views ISs as having a strong sense of personal agency which dictates their decision-making. Initially confronted by a new unfamiliar academic and sociocultural environment ISs are displaced, but they position themselves to respond to the demands of the new environment through active development of management strategies. ISs’ sense of agency is evident through the deliberate decisions they make to ensure adjustment to the academic environment. Sociocultural adjustments assume less importance for ISs. Thus, ISs are active agents in the construction and reconstruction of their identity as they negotiate the host academic and sociocultural environments, showing capacity for transformative learning. It is this perspective of ISs which needs to become an integral aspect of Australian academic discourse.
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APPENDICES
APPENDIX 1

EXAMPLE OF AN INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW AND PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Interview 1: Findings & Analysis

The first interview is with a Muslim female student studying Pharmacy at PG level. Miriam (not real name) is in the first semester of her studies.

Part 1: Summary of Interview

1. Reasons for coming to Australia
   • Need to study in the English language – effects of globalisation & demands of an increasingly interdependent economic world – ultimately to increase career opportunities
   • Cultural experience – being alone in a foreign country; independence seen to be a positive experience
   • Changing Saudi world which is trying to break out of its conservative mould and depend less on its men and provide more opportunities for women – desire to promote and learn more about cultural understanding
   • Choice of Curtin made by Ministry of Higher Education (Saudi Arabia)

2. Main difficulties faced
   • Adapting to working in mixed groups esp when having to work with men from the same community
   • Aware that cultural differences exist but emphasises need to understand host culture and adapt to it
   • Culture is internalised & while there is a desire to adapt, quite apparent that this does not lead to total abandonment of original culture
   • Homesickness – missing large family gatherings; has made numerous friends but this is not a replacement for family esp as most students are busy with their own studies
   • Adapting to Aussie accent of academic staff
   • Writing in English and a belief that EL PROFICIENCY still needs improvement; a perception confirmed by academic staff comments that ‘international students need to improve on their English and seek necessary support’

3. Pathway programs
   • Important in academic & cultural preparation
   • Provides clear links & context for future studies
   • Provides opportunities for improvements in EL
   • Provides a good basis for future study by focussing on relevant skills
   • Promotes intercultural understanding – shows that different styles of working exist but there is readiness to accept such difference
   • Working in mixed groups was new and challenging given previous learning and work experience which was in all female groups. New mixed groups was initially difficult but higher level of comfort working with males of other cultures. Cultural barriers still exist when working with men from similar culture.
   • Commonality of goals and similar language experiences makes the pathway context a ‘soft ground’ and therefore less threatening than having to present in front of mainstream audience where that commonality and subsequent understanding is removed.

4. Teaching Methods & Role of Teacher
   • Main difference appears to be in the teaching of English and associated learning experiences
   • Group work is not a new experience but working in mixed sex groups is quite new.
   • Previously from a private, all-girls learning environment, thus had slightly different learning experiences to those from government schools. This is mainly due to the teaching staff who were more international with few Saudi teachers.
• Teaching methods appear to be similar to that in Saudi Arabia with content based units but the teaching of English is different, more didactic in nature.
• Main difference is in dealing with academic staff. There is less distinction between staff & students, less separation and less of the feeling that the teacher is superior to the student. There appears to be a more friendly environment lacking in Saudi education.

5. English Language Proficiency
• This is seen to be the most difficult issue esp in writing and grammar.
• Academic staff appear to highlight the difference in international students by highlighting the ‘otherness’.
• Although international students are doing as well if not better than some local students, they are still being told that they require assistance with their English.
• English poses the greatest difficulty as it not their mother tongue and accents, technical language/vocabulary makes the situation more difficult.
• In one unit which require clinical placement, student has difficulty with understanding rapid pace of local students Australian speech and accent.
• In this unit there appears to be a fear of being judged, of humiliating oneself. This does not come across in the university setting but seems to be an issue in the professional context.

6. Experience with group work
• Initially difficult due to shyness; also difficult to work in mixed groups
• However, group work is seen to be a beneficial experience in strengthening personal knowledge; collaborative learning is seen to be a positive experience

Part 2: Summary of main issues in relation to study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>EL Proficiency</th>
<th>Cognition</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Viewed as being important but necessary in studying in a foreign country</td>
<td>Perceived to be the biggest problem esp in terms of academic writing &amp; grammatical structures Speaking is an issue for some</td>
<td>Sets clear learning goals and appears to be a high achiever; goal setting can be seen as attempt to exercise control over the current situation – self regulated learning (SLR)</td>
<td>Being a Muslim female who is partially veiled highlights physical difference &amp; highlights issues specific to this group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainly to do with working in mixed groups</td>
<td>Academic staff comments on the differing abilities of international students confirms this perception; promotes the ‘otherness’ status – are such comments necessary or appropriate?</td>
<td>Shows understanding and recognises the need to adapt to host culture for future success</td>
<td>Aspects of gender &amp; culture are interrelated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time and focus on studying limits opportunities for social interaction &amp; networking</td>
<td>Comparison between international students &amp; local students can be quite damaging to the confidence of the int student</td>
<td>Does not appear to view herself as less intelligent or capable; just requires more assistance with EL PROFICIENCY</td>
<td>In this instance, female Muslim appears to adopt a dual persona; one when dealing with mixed groups without men from similar culture. More confident, less inhibited and cultural barriers not as pronounced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture is intrinsic and part of oneself so some beliefs are brought into the host culture but awareness of difference seems to help with coping. ‘Forget about it is a common phrase</td>
<td>Interesting that academic performance is high but EL still needs work. Marking standards &amp; criteria – what are these based on?</td>
<td>Cognition is strongly related to goal setting, an important aspect of motivational research.</td>
<td>However when dealing with mixed groups with Saudi males, gender barriers related to culture are put up as different expectations are in play thus cultural expectations of Saudi culture surface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>EL Proficiency</td>
<td>Cognition</td>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>which raises issues.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>more strongly even though both individuals are in similar learning situations in a foreign country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When operating in a different culture, one accepts the positive and discards the negative</td>
<td>More confidence when operating in the uni setting; professional setting seems more threatening</td>
<td>This seems to be the umbrella ‘lens; with which the other three can be viewed as</td>
<td>Gender &amp; how one interacts depends on the community of practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDICES 2A & B
### Summary and Analysis of APC - Analysis of Specific Ethnic Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to the Analysis</td>
<td>Provides an overview of the analysis and its objectives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Methodology for Analysis</td>
<td>Explains the methods used for the analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>Details the sources and methods of data collection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>Includes statistical analysis and results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Summarizes the findings and implications of the analysis.</td>
</tr>
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**Appendix 2A**

Summary and analysis of APC - Analysis of Specific Ethnic Groups
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<tr>
<th>Колонка 1</th>
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<td>Текст 4</td>
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Алфавитные ряды
## APPENDIX 2B

### SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF CHCs - ANALYSIS OF SPECIFIC ETHNIC GROUPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis Items</th>
<th>Interview 1</th>
<th>Interview 2</th>
<th>Interview 3</th>
<th>Interview 4</th>
<th>Interview 5</th>
<th>Interview 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background</strong></td>
<td>Chinese female</td>
<td>Chinese female</td>
<td>Chinese female</td>
<td>Chinese male</td>
<td>Chinese male</td>
<td>Chinese male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Performance</strong></td>
<td>2 PHD’s</td>
<td>2 D’s</td>
<td>2 Credits</td>
<td>Average: 64%</td>
<td>NA: Data Collection</td>
<td>Average: 65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reasons for coming to Australia</strong></td>
<td>Lower costs but recent exchange rates have made Australia less expensive</td>
<td>Cost of course/living</td>
<td>Cost of course/living</td>
<td>Course of study</td>
<td>Direct entry pathway offered at Curtin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Different cultural experiences</strong></td>
<td>Curtin offers a wider range of courses than other universities</td>
<td>Overseas graduates tend to have better opportunities and are more competitive</td>
<td>Personal reasons</td>
<td>Culture change: Becoming aware of what we don’t know &amp; have not learned</td>
<td>New opportunities &amp; learning experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improve level of English</strong></td>
<td>Curtin only offers the course</td>
<td>Has a job waiting back home</td>
<td>To experience new things &amp; to continue to improve comfort zone</td>
<td>To experience new things &amp; to continue to improve comfort zone</td>
<td>Learning in a developed country to ensure betterment of own country</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entry Pathway</strong></td>
<td>HELP, RL</td>
<td>HELP, RL</td>
<td>HELP</td>
<td>HELP</td>
<td>HELP</td>
<td>Direct entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial difficulties</strong></td>
<td>Some homesickness</td>
<td>Language &amp; understanding which were time-consuming</td>
<td>Language &amp; understanding which were very time-consuming</td>
<td>Difficult to adapt culturally due to strong personal networks which have been great assistance</td>
<td>Difficult to adapt culturally due to strong personal networks which have been great assistance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current difficulties</strong></td>
<td>Still needs to continue working on EL skills</td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Poor dynamics between tutor &amp; student</td>
<td>Writing &amp; expressing himself</td>
<td>Writing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sem 2 2019 results</strong></td>
<td>Average: 65%</td>
<td>Average: 60-65%</td>
<td>Average: 70-75%</td>
<td>Average: 70-75%</td>
<td>Average: 70-75%</td>
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364
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Relevant Information</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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APPENDIX 3

COLOUR CODING LEGEND

1) T & L: - Yellow
2) Group Work - Pink
3) Independent Learning - Green
4) SRL/ Learning Goals - Red
5) Culture - Blue
6) Religion - Purple

4) Potential responsibilities - Turquoise

Other factors
Q  So you were a teacher in Iraq and you came here, why did you come here?
A  To finish my study in Ph.D in interior design and I got a scholarship from my government to finish Ph.D.
Q  From Iraq.
A  Yes from Iraq.
Q  So how long were you teaching in Iraq?
A  About six years yes.
Q  And you were teaching in interior design?
A  Yes interior design.
Q  Did you like it?
A  Yes of course, I enjoy my students and the materials we used to learn.
Q  So why did you come to Australia and why Curtin University?
A  This is not my option because my government found Ph.D, my major in Curtin University because I didn't find Ph.D in Murdoch or UWA so Curtin it was offered.
Q  The Ph.D in interior design?
A  In interior design yes.
Q  Well that's good to know that we offer something a bit different. Are you happy though with your choice of Curtin?
A  Yes I am happy.
Q  What do you see to be the benefits of an Australian education, so you know going through the Australian education system what do you think will be good for you in the future?
A  For example as you know my country faced in the last years a lot of problems after the war and the education become not very advanced like other countries in the world so I think Australia it is different country and provide a lot of opportunities and chances to develop my ability in interior design and also high technology, in every area I think it is very good to complete my education.
Q  What do you see as, you study in Australia, what is the purpose in coming here to do your Ph.D? What do you want to take back with you to your country? Do you want to stay here or do you want to go back to Iraq?
I should go back to Iraq because I have a contract with my country, I should go back. The benefit from my study here in Australia for example firstly learning the English, I develop my English language and also have idea about new designs and my major and also develop my ability in my field, interior design and I think when I go back to my country I will benefit for my students and provide new ideas about design and new concepts about design for my students.

Q: So it’s basically to benefit your students’ design knowledge?
A: Yes.

Q: Do you think you’d learn anything else from being in Australia?
A: Yes new culture, this a new culture, new habits, I learn new habits here.

Q: Can you explain a bit more?
A: For example as you know there is difference between my culture and the culture of Australia.

Q: Can you elaborate on that?
A: Yes. For example here it’s very, there is so free and more freedom, that people can talk about everything. This is not allowed in my country, for example we can’t talk in policy, for examples the rules of my country or the rules of my university but here I think students or other people have the chance to express on their ideas.

Q: And do you find that useful, do you find that positive? How do you react to that?
A: Yes I think it’s positive because I can’t feel, if I want to express on my idea or on my feeling I don’t face problems you know. I can’t express, I think this is good, for example if I want to give a new idea for university, maybe if I am teacher here or student maybe the teachers here or the people who are responsible of the university, maybe they will take this idea and discuss with me about it, for example to develop interior design, in the major of interior design but in my country if I want to give idea this is not allowed especially for the teachers who have started now, just for the old teachers for example.

Q: I want to come back to that cultural difference so when you first came here and you were expected to give your opinions were you able to do that easily or was it difficult? Did it take you time to start doing that?
A: Here in Australia?

Q: Yes.
A: Yes because just in my experience in language for example, language centre yes the teacher, I can deal with the teachers and give my opinion.

Q: And you didn’t find that difficult to do?
A: No, no, it’s not difficult but in my country it’s difficult, the teacher always.
Q Why is it difficult in your country?
A Because it’s not allowed to student to give more opinion or to say for example opposite opinion with the teacher so always the student should follow the teacher rules or teacher’s policy, the university.

Q So it’s interesting because you are probably the only student that I’m interviewing who is a teacher as well as a student so what are your expectations of students when you teach in your country, like do you allow them to express themselves or?
A Yes for me I allow them but when I say that because when I was a student in secondary school or in my university, my college we have some, not all but most teachers were very strict and they didn’t allow for us to express our idea, for example we can’t say when they mark the projects for us there’s no fair for us, it always depends on some criteria but I think this criteria was not good.

Q Why do you say was not good?
A Yes for example when I study in my college through the years of my study I prepared my project and I study hard but when I come to finish my project, to submit my project the teacher always depends on the final project, they didn’t depend on the previous work. I think this is not fair.

Q Not fair. Do you find it a little bit different because you’re a Muslim woman who’s got a veil, do you find any difficulties in Australian culture?
A No not yet, it’s okay, everything is okay because before I come here I thought maybe I will face this problem because I wear hijab, maybe, but I think until now I didn’t face this problem so it’s okay. The people here is very kind here with Muslim people.

Q That’s good. Okay now we know that you did the bridging course before doing your Ph.D, was it useful? I mean you can compare both. Give me the similarities and differences?
A For example I think this bridging it’s useful from some points, for example they focused on grammar but the last one bridging they didn’t focus on grammar because the teacher considered the students very perfect so they didn’t care about for example teaching student grammar English but I think this bridging is okay. And last one it was good for example TSS lecture or TSS lesson it was difficult, very difficult for us but after I finished I think it’s good because you can evaluate articles or materials, any articles when I read.

Q So in terms of preparation you’ve actually got two lots of preparation isn’t it because you’ve had the grammar preparation now and you’ve had the skills preparation before. Do you feel that you are prepared now to do your Ph.D studies because you’ve started about one semester of your Ph.D?
A Yes my writing I feel it’s good, not very good but it’s good because my supervisor always said your writing it’s okay but I face difficulties when I speak because in my house I always speak Arabic and I don’t have a lot of people, Australian people to speak English. Most of my friends are from Iraq so just when I come to Curtin just I speak English when I come to Curtin.
Q: So you mean outside of Curtin you don’t speak English at all?
A: Yes because my friends are from Iraq and when I speak with my husband and my son in Arabic.
Q: In Arabic as well? Okay well that is a problem isn’t it because otherwise you’re not given enough opportunities to practice the language.
A: Yes I know this is not good for me but I don’t have friends from Australia.
Q: Or from other cultures. Why is it you don’t have friends from other cultures? So essentially what you’re saying is in Curtin you speak in English because you’ve got your supervisor here so you speak to your supervisor, do you have friends on campus that you speak English to?
A: Yes I have a little bit. Also my office, my office me and Haider and he also from Iraq and he speaks Arabic language but when I write I feel it’s okay because I have time to arrange my idea, to arrange my grammar.
Q: So why is it that your friends in Curtin and outside of Curtin are all Arabic speakers? Why don’t you have friends from other cultures?
A: I have but a little bit, from China and from Korea, from India but after we finish bridging we just chat on the Facebook and must enjoy because they attend another department to finish Masters or to finish.
Q: So you don’t have the contact anymore?
A: Yes I didn’t see them.
Q: So when you were doing bridging did you think you were speaking in English a lot more?
A: Yes.
Q: Because with Ph.D it’s a bit difficult isn’t it?
A: Yes.
Q: Do you think your English is at a sufficient level now for Ph.D? Do you feel confident?
A: No because I think English, any new language it needs more time to develop and I think it’s not enough six months or one year to improve my language. I’m talking about myself because I feel I need more, always I need more especially in this age, it’s not easy.
Q: How old are you if you don’t mind me asking?
A: Thirty-six.
Q: So do you think as you grow older it’s harder to learn a language?
A. Yes not to just like children, for example my son started for two weeks but in house sometimes I try to speak with him some vocabulary. I think he is better than me, he learn quickly.

Q. Age is a factor isn’t it? Have you tried to get any English language support?

A. You mean another course?

Q. Yes.

A. Yes after I get my result from bridging course if I pass I want to just maybe in the city to improve my language.

Q. Speaking and writing or just speaking?

A. Both is okay.

Q. It is very demanding isn’t it the English language in your course now because your thesis is based in English and you have to write a lot more.

A. The teachers told me it’s okay, your language is okay but you know I feel I need more.

Q. Do you have any discussions like Ph.D discussion groups?

A. Sometimes the students from, the Ph.D students in interior design, the reading circle. Sometimes if we have time me and Haider combine with them to discuss.

Q. So how do you feel about participating in these discussions? Do you feel confident?

A. Yes because I understand especially because it’s my major so I can understand and participate and discuss with them about some concepts or some ideas about interior design.

Q. So can you describe for me what happens during the discussions?

A. They offer a topic to discuss, for example they said in the message today we will discuss lighting in the interior design and they sent article about this topic and before the day of discussion I can read it to understand what’s the material about and when we come the person who is responsible on the discussion start to introduce the topic and after that each student discusses.

Q. So what have you been putting forward, your points, what kind of points do you put forward for the discussion?

A. Any points about the topic.

Q. About the topic and you don’t feel uncomfortable or anything, you feel that you’re understood, people understand you and you can express yourself quite clearly?

A. Yes but sometimes if I not understand because you know the people, the native speakers sometimes speak quickly, I can’t catch everything so I ask the student to repeat the question or to repeat the idea. After that I understand.
Q: Do they mind repeating the idea?
A: Yes.
Q: They don’t mind or they mind?
A: No they repeat it.
Q: That’s good. Do you think your English has improved quite a lot in the last little while?
A: Yes. This year and last year yeah I think it’s okay.
Q: You’re much better at communicating?
A: Not enough but it’s better than last year.
Q: So what did you do to help you improve your English since you came?
A: What I should do?
Q: What did you do because your English has improved a lot since you started bridging about a year ago right so how did you make that improvement?
A: In my house I always dedicate one hour to listening, for example BBC, yes especially BBC I think is okay and watching TV, Australian TV to improve my listening and also sometimes I in my house I try to write a diary, for example today I did this and this and this to improve my writing. Sometimes I ask other students from Iraq because we have one student he is a teacher in English language and he is very good, he’s old man, sometimes I ask him to check my grammar or to give me some idea about the grammar.
Q: Okay so you’ve actually taken a very active role in trying to improve your English?
A: Yes.
Q: If I can ask you, your friends from Iraq and from Middle Eastern countries do they do the same thing do you know?
A: Yeah I think because when we discuss about this issue most students do the same, not for example I write my diary, other friends just practice listening especially the people who didn’t have a family, don’t have family with them, I mean single males I think their situation better than us because they live in the accommodation in Curtin and they interact with other and discuss with other students from different cultures. I feel these students are better than us in English.
Q: Because they’ve got more opportunities to speak in English?
A: Yes all the day you speak English with the other colleagues.
Q: But you’re very highly motivated. I mean it takes a lot motivation to make the extra effort to listen to BBC and to write your diary because writing a diary is not easy, can you try and explain to me so I can understand you better why your motivation is so high?
A Why sorry motivation level?
Q Yes because you really want to improve your English right, why do you really want to make so much effort to improve your English?
A Yes because I told you before I feel I’m not very good, I just feel maybe in the middle level but I need more to be, to improve more.
Q Is it because you want to do very well on your Ph.D?
A Yes especially you know Ph.D means high ability in English.
Q So that’s why you’re making all the efforts?
A Yes.
Q Do you think it’s worth the effort? It is isn’t it?
A Yes.
Q Can we go back a little bit to when you first came to Perth and to Curtin University, can you remember how you felt about a year ago?
A I was very scared.
Q You were very scared?
A Yes and when I came here my English was okay, so so because I can’t understand the people but I feel I’m afraid because if I speak I thought my speaking is not good but I can’t understand them but I was very scared when I speak because I felt maybe the people not kind, not lovely because maybe I speak wrong.
Q They will judge you?
A Yes maybe yes but this is in the first six months I was very scared and especially when I was in ELICOS, I understand the teacher, everything but I feel shy to share the idea with the teachers.
Q So how did you overcome that shyness, that fear?
A Yeah more practice about special that and presentation was very useful for students when we did presentation test in ELICOS bridging course. I think presentation test or presentation practice is good for students to improve the quality and the speaking and the discussion with the students, with the teachers.
Q That’s good. So you said the first six months was quite scary for you with the teachers and with your classmates.
A And also when I go to shopping, I went to shop.
Q So how did you get rid of the fear when you go to shops and so on?
A Especially when the people speak very quickly I can't understand, just I say the cost, how much cost and I pay the money and if they ask me something and I didn't understand I say sorry because my English not good.

Q And then they repeat for you?

A Yes then they repeat for me to making sense.

Q So how do you feel now?

A Now I feel it's better than last year yes.

Q So you got used to everything?

A Yes I do some for example when I call to doctor to book for appointment when I go to a doctor I always use the phone because last times I always depend on my husband, he is not very good but he is better than, he feel confident when he speak but now I use the phone to speak with the people and also another thing when last year I didn't pass in bridging course I think this problem make me more, how can I say, more confident because I go to international and discuss about my.

Q So you became more confident because you failed?

A More confident yes because I didn't feel shy because I went to international to discuss all of my problem and went to my supervisor to talk for her about my problem because if I'm not pass bridging course, if I not enrol in Ph.D I will face a problem with my government. Yes I go for everywhere here, also in bridging course I will speak with Jake yes so it was good advice for me.

Q That's good, it had a benefit. So why did you fail the bridging course?

A I was one or two exams I was not good, my health was not good and when I did the listening test on the TESL I was not good.

Q So you were not well?

A Yes. I got 64 but.

Q It wasn't enough.

A No.

Q Okay so you talked about being afraid but did you have your family here with you, you had your husband and your child?

A My husband and my son yes.

Q Did you feel homesick at all for Iraq? Did you want to go back to Iraq?

A First time yes I feel homesick but now it's a little bit just I miss my mother and father yes and I worry about the situation in my country.

Q It must be very hard for you isn't it?
A: Yes it’s very hard.

Q: You want to be there but at the same time you can’t be there because you’re studying here but you must also prefer to stay here because your son and your husband are safe but then your mother and your father...

A: And my brother are in my country.

Q: Does this impact a lot on your studies?

A: Yes especially in the last year in the bridging course because the last year was very difficult in Iraq, the situation was very difficult and always I heard bad news from because I lost some relatives, my cousin was killed last year and yes.

Q: So how have you been coping with all this?

A: I should continue because if I decide to go back or to return to my country I should take about $100,000 to my government.

Q: $100,000 Australian dollars?

A: Yes.

Q: That’s a lot of money.

A: Yes.

Q: For everybody it’s a lot of money.

A: Of course because I have a contract I told you before with my government so I should continue to finish my study and not return to my country.

Q: But when your relatives you know like you said your relatives were shot dead, were they shot dead in the war and so on have you looked for support at the university? You know there’s counselling available like in the medical centre you can go to a counsellor to help you deal with things like this.

A: No I didn’t try.

Q: You didn’t try, so you just push it all aside and focus on studying?

A: Yes focus, sometimes crying is better to feel comfort.

Q: You’re a very strong woman Aseel.

A: The teachers in the bridging course told me you’re very strong, how come you’re studying Ph.D on the bridging course and you have a lot of problems in your country, but the life should continue, what I should do

Q: Where are you finding all this strength? Is it because you were so focused on getting your studies finished, is it because it would be better for you and your family? I think it’s highly amazing, I just want to try and understand it.
A  Yes I don’t know how but I don’t like feeling [inaudible]. I mean I don’t like feel in my life. I prefer to continue to get my chance to get my improve my life, to finish my study yes because my son and my husband also suffer with me when I study. Sometimes I am very angry and my husband always deal with me to, I feel my husband always support me to calm down.

Q  What does your husband do?

A  Now he’s working in supermarket as cashier.

Q  But he finished his Ph.D is it?

A  No, no, he finished computer system in Iraq.

Q  So he here’s because you’re studying here is it?

A  Yes.

Q  That’s good that you’ve got a lot of support at home. Well I think it’s amazing what you’re doing and you should be very, very proud of yourself.

A  Thank you.

Q  I don’t suppose you have time with your Ph.D and your bridging and your family but have you joined any student organisations, any student clubs in Curtin?

A  No I don’t have time.

Q  You don’t have time.

A  Because I should go back to my house specifically in five or four o’clock after I finish my study of Ph.D here and my husband start his work at 6pm until 6am, the morning, so I should stay with my son because I don’t have time to join with any clubs or other students.

Q  Do you know about student organisations and clubs and activities on campus?

A  No.

Q  You don’t know about them?

A  No.

Q  Would it make a difference if you had the information?

A  I’m not interested about clubs or organisations. Sometimes I can enjoy the weekend with my friends from Iraq also. We go to parks or beach.

Q  So you prefer to socialise with your Iraqi friends?

A  Yes.

Q  You don’t want to make new friends, not really?
A: No because you know it’s different culture.
Q: Please explain that to me?
A: For example if I join with from Christian or Hindus or another religion you know you have special food so we can’t eat pork, just vegetarian or Halal food as you know and I think it’s not good to, how can I say?
Q: Imose?
A: Yes impose the people to eat the same food like us yes.
Q: Okay so food is one thing?
A: Yes one thing and also if I go to clubs always the people I think they are drink alcohol and as you know I’m Muslim and some Muslims drink also but because I wear hijab so I should respect my religion.
Q: So it’s food and religion?
A: Yes.
Q: Anything else like in terms of communication?
A: No it’s okay because most people I met in here were very kind, from China, from Australia, from India, from any...
Q: From any country.
A: Yes
Q: That’s good. I want to talk to you a little bit about the teacher’s role and the teaching methods okay. What do you think is the role of the teacher? It’s interesting because you’re a teacher and you’re a student now so what do you think should be the role of the teacher?
A: The role of the teacher.
Q: So it’s not a hard question.
A: Firstly I think the teacher should support students, firstly provide the materials and explain more about the topic or about some ideas or the topic and after that the teacher should support the students especially if the student for example is very weak and he doesn’t prepare his homework or anything. I think the teacher should always encourage student to be more confident and to encourage him to prepare his homework.
Q: So basically the teacher’s role is to help the student with the knowledge?
A: Yes.
Q: Can you see any differences between the role of the teacher here and the role of the teacher in Iraq?

[Comments]
- Religion places restrictions as well
- Restrictions associated with the hijab
- No perceived difficulties associated with communication with other cultures
- Perception is that it's role is one of support, encourage & assist, it's should not judge, Develop confidence in students
A: In my country it depends on the teacher.
Q: So it depends on the person is it?
A: Yes the person, some teachers were very good, they deal with the students very friendly but there were some teachers very difficult to deal with them, are very strict. Yes it depends on the person.
Q: But what is the general thing in Iraq? Generally what are teachers like?
A: The teachers in my country are very strict and there's no flexibility especially when they give marks to students. They didn't care about their circumstances for the students, the students face some problems or health problems or family problems they didn't care about that, they just focus on the test, on the work of the students. They didn't care about what's the effect, what's the positive effects on the students.
Q: Is the relationship between the students and the teacher a very comfortable relationship or is there a division, like I'm the teacher, you're the student, you have to listen to me?
A: Yes like this.
Q: It's like that?
A: Yes and we always, here in Australia for example the teachers there is no wide gap between the students and the teachers. In my country when we try to call the teacher we should say teacher Aseel, teacher Michele, okay we always use.
Q: The title?
A: Yes the title but here no, like friends I feel when I speak with the teacher, I can say Aseel, Michele you know.
Q: Like when you speak to Diane for example do you say Professor Diane or do you say Diane?
A: Because this is very usual in my country so I can't, sometimes she told me it's not necessary to say, call me Dr, I always call her Dr.
Q: Dr Diane.
A: But I can't change my habit.
Q: Because you are quite used to having that title because that title means that there is that.
A: Not just for the people, the teachers or for example my aunt and my uncle, I should say uncle, my uncle, I can't call him in his name.
Q: Why is the title so important in your culture?
A: Because in Arabic culture we should maybe use always high respect words for the old men, we should respect the old men or the old women and the teachers or the boss in the work. I don't know why, because always we use this.
Q: It's practice for you.
A: Yes.
Q: What about teaching methods, is it quite different here compared to in Iraq?
A: Teaching methods?
Q: Yes, so how do you teach? I mean I suppose it's a little bit different in design isn't it? How do you teach in Iraq your design units?
A: Yes in design you know because design it's similar like here because we have free class to because you know the artist should be have the.
Q: Creativity?
A: Yes creative so the teachers always allow to students go in the classroom to design or go to garden to design.
Q: So there's a bit more freedom?
A: Yes especially in the design lessons but in the literature or theoretical and this is no, we should stay in the class and listen to the teacher.
Q: Is it similar to here?
A: In the design yes similar but in the theoretical no, the teacher very strict.
Q: Here the teacher is not so strict?
A: Yes, yes, no so strict, flexible.
Q: The other thing about studying here is that there's a lot of group work.
A: Yes in my country individual work.
Q: So how do you feel about group work?
A: Group work yes I think it has advantages because when I study in a group work I can benefit from other students and we can solve problems together, maybe another student has a good idea that I can get from him. I think it's good yes but in my country always individual work.
Q: The other thing I wanted to ask you and some of the Muslim students brought this up for me, how do you feel about working with men in your group?
A: No it's okay.
Q: And being in the same class as men, is it different for you compared to those from Saudi Arabia maybe?
A: Saudi Arabia it's different because the culture, not the religion, the culture in Saudi Arabia very strict.
Q: Compared to Iraq is it?
A: Yes we are more freedom than 1 mean compared with Saudi because the culture of Saudi is very strict in every areas. In Saudi the women and men should be separated, at college and work, I think also in primary and kindy but in my country it’s okay, the primary male and female together but in primary school and secondary should be separate but in the college no.
Q: So were you in a girls school?
A: Yes in girls school and boys school.
Q: For you were you in a girls school in Iraq?
A: Yes.
Q: Secondary and then when you went to university it was combined?
A: Yes.
Q: So how did you feel going from a girl’s school to co-ed?
A: It’s okay because.
Q: Is that where you met your husband?
A: Yes it’s okay, just maybe first time the girls feel afraid about this situation but after that it’s easy.
Q: I suppose it was a little bit different because you are a teacher and have been a teacher for six years so the way in which your perspectives are is a little bit different to a lot of other students isn’t it?
A: Yes.
Q: I would think so. So what are the difficulties you face, we’re almost done, what are the difficulties you face in your studies so far?
A: Here?
Q: Here.
A: Well firstly the language.
Q: Language yes.
A: Sometimes the methods here.
Q: With the language what have you done to help yourself with the language? Have you gone to the learning centre or got a tutor or anything?
A: No, no.
Q: You just tried to improve by listening to the BBC and writing?
A: Yes. About the study and for example in the Masters or in Ph.D it's different because in my country I remember when my supervisor I always depend on my supervisor, always supervisor gives us the material and the students in everything depends on the supervisor but here I think it's different because supervisor just give some idea, you should depend on myself to find, to search.

Q: And how do you feel about that, having to be independent and look for your own information and do your own research?
A: It's okay when I become independent but we face the problems because I came from different culture and different methods in learning and in teaching so I face some problems with that.

Q: Can you explain the different methods of learning and teaching?
A: Yes I mean in Ph.D because I was depending on my supervisor, always she was show me the way.

Q: This is your Masters?
A: Yes in my Masters.

Q: In Iraq?
A: Yes I wasn't independent. I was always depend on my supervisor but here I feel more independent. It's okay but just I face some problems first time but now I feel it's okay, that's better for us, for students.

Q: Can you describe for me like when you say you're dependent on your supervisor in Iraq do you mean like she gives you the information or she tells you what to do?
A: If I face a problem in my thesis and I couldn't solve this problem my supervisor told me which solution is better but here for example when I did the methodology with Dr. Diane she told me always you should think about this problem, how can solve these problems. She didn't tell me what's the solution, I should always find another teacher and another students from Ph.D to help me.

Q: So do you find that frustrating or do you find it positive or?
A: First time frustrating yes but now I think it's okay. It's a good idea.

Q: Why is it a good idea?
A: Because I feel more confident. Now I can know which data base is good me and where I should go to ask and who person I should ask.

Q: How do you think all of this will improve your own teaching when you go back to Iraq?
A: Maybe I will allow to my students, I mean not allow to students to depend on me, I just give the topic and go to library to find material, to make them more independent.
Q: Yes because you think it's actually a really good thing.

A: Yes because when I was in college I felt like a child, just teacher give us and feed us materials on everything on my study.

Q: You know when you first said initially it was a bit frustrating and then you got used to it, how did you get used to it, to the system of being independent here? How did you become more used to it?

A: For example firstly when I start to do the candidacy or my proposal I was very confused and I didn't know from which point I should start and always went to Dr. Diane to ask when, where I should start this point or like this but after that I depended on myself searching by computer, go to library, ask librarian, I think it's good for me because also this is good for my language because make me more confident and remove the shy from. I can discuss with the people in the library and also my project not just Curtin library, ECU and UWA and Murdoch so when I went to this library I feel it's okay because I found a lot of information and I found some people help me in this situation.

Q: Okay so basically because you had no choice you had to find a way of managing and you just asked people for help and tried to solve your own sorts of issues?

A: Yes.

Q: That's very good.

A: Yes. I think it's good.

Q: Is there anything else you want to add about your experience of studying in Australia?

A: I think we covered.

Q: We covered everything. Okay well very, very good. That was very good. Thank you very much for doing this for me.

END OF TRANSCRIPT
APPENDIX 4

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM
INFORMATION SHEET

The perceptions and experiences of international students from Persian-Gulf Cultures (PGCs) and Confucianist Heritage Cultures (CHCs) in adjusting to tertiary study at an Australian university

Dear [ ],

I am a staff member of the University of Western Australia. A doctoral student of mine, Michele Doray, is conducting her doctoral research on The perceptions and experiences of international students from Persian-Gulf Cultures (PGCs) and Confucianist Heritage Cultures (CHCs) in adjusting to tertiary study at an Australian university. This sheet contains important information for participants relating to the methods, results, benefits and risks of participating in this research study. Please read it carefully and store it in a safe place for future reference.

You are invited to take part in the study to investigate how students from PGCs and CHCs adjust to tertiary study at an Australian university. International students are a vital component of the Australian higher education industry. Hence, understanding the challenges they face in transitioning from their home culture to the host culture is important. Similarly, it is important to know the strategies they employ to manage, understand and construct meaning of the new environment. The findings from this research will assist tertiary institutions to develop policy and programs that support international students adjust to their host culture.

If you agree to be part of this research, you will be invited to participate in two rounds of interviews: once during the first semester of your mainstream study, and again 12 months later. Both interviews will be approximately 45-60 minutes and will be audio-recorded. Interviews will be conducted at a time and place that is convenient to you. The researcher will also take field notes during the interview. Interviews will be transcribed and you will be given an opportunity to check these.

If you agree to participate, the researcher will also require access to the university database in order to obtain your Semester Weighted Average and Course Weighted Average marks, along with your IELTS results (if applicable). Only average marks for the first semester of your mainstream study and for your whole course will be used. These are required to provide a general indication of your academic progress.

Some of the results from this research may be used in national and international conference presentations or published in peer reviewed journals.

The benefits of participating in this research include having an opportunity to discuss the issues faced by international students at an Australian tertiary institution and sharing coping strategies. The potential risks of participating in this research are inconvenience through the time required for attending interviews and checking transcripts. Possible discomfort might be created through description of experiences, depending on cultural background.
Your contribution will be strictly confidential and you will not be personally identified in any way. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide to take part, you have the right to withdraw from this research at any time without prejudice and to withdraw any data you have supplied to the study.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, you may contact me or email or call. If you are willing to participate in this research, please sign the attached form to indicate your consent prior to the interview commencing.

Yours Sincerely,

Associate Professor Christine Howitt

Approval Number: RA/4/1/2441

Approval to conduct this research has been provided by the University of Western Australia, in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. Any person considering participation in this research project, or agreeing to participate, may raise any questions or issues with the researchers at any time.

In addition, any person not satisfied with the response of researchers may raise ethics issues or concerns, and may make any complaints about this research project by contacting the Human Ethics Office at the University of Western Australia on (08) 6488 3703 or by emailing to humanethics@uwa.edu.au

All research participants are entitled to retain a copy of any Participant Information Form and/or Participant Consent Form relating to this research project.
CONSENT FORM

The perceptions and experiences of international students from Persian-Gulf Cultures (PGCs) and Confucianist Heritage Cultures (CHCs) in adjusting to tertiary study at an Australian university

I have read the information provided and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I may withdraw my consent at any time, without reason and without prejudice. I understand that my participation is voluntary.

I understand that participation in the research project will involve me talking to Michele Doray about my experiences and perceptions of adjusting to being an international student. I understand the need to participate in two rounds of interviews: once during the first semester of my mainstream course and again 12 months later. The interviews will be approximately 45-60 minutes and will be audio-recorded. The venue will be one in which I feel most comfortable. I also understand that the researcher will require access to my course results and my IELTS scores, through the university data base.

I understand that all information collected will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this research project. I understand that I will not be identified in any conference presentation or publication that results from this project. All information provided is treated as strictly confidential and will not be released by the investigator to anyone. The only exception to this principle of confidentiality is if documents are required by law.

I have been advised as to what data is being collected, what the purpose is, and what will be done with the data upon completion of the research.

I agree that the research data that I provide for the project may be published provided my name or other identifying information is not used.

Name                  Date                  Signature

Approval to conduct this research has been provided by the University of Western Australia, in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. Any person considering participation in this research project, or agreeing to participate, may raise any questions or issues with the researchers at any time.

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