Internationalization of Higher Education: Mainland Chinese students' first year experience in Hong Kong

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ABSTRACT

International mobility in higher education (HE) has been exponentially expanding and on a consistent basis over the past decade. Hong Kong is a society which is both familiar and strange to Mainland Chinese students because of the unique and different political and sociocultural relationships in comparison to their homeland. The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) is the only bilingual higher education institution in Hong Kong and this makes it attractive to Mainland Chinese students. While previous researches have examined the phenomenon of international students choosing to enroll in English-medium universities in top destinations like the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, France and Germany, little research has been done in Hong Kong, where English medium is a highly contested issue. To fill the research gap, this thesis examines mainland Chinese students' adaptation experiences upon arrival in Hong Kong. The research focuses on mainland students' adaptation experiences upon arrival in Hong Kong, including their strategies and motivations. To these ends, the linguistic and socio-cultural adaptation experiences these mainland Chinese students encountered in their first year of university study were investigated and study through a mixed-method approach. The theoretical framework, push-pull model, has enabled the exploration in different levels, including macro and micro. Findings concluded that the confusion of "bilingualism" and language barrier, especially Cantonese, were linguistic adaptation experiences participants faced. In the socio-cultural aspect, findings showed that friendship, discrimination, culture, identity, loneliness and politics were experiences faced. Findings also showed that participants dealt with and managed these experiences through different coping strategies including taking Cantonese lessons, making friends only with students of similar background, soliciting help from local friends, joining local student societies, endurance and acceptance, "let nature takes it course", and have not found ways to cope. The study also revealed that assistance provided by university is insufficient and needs improvement. The implications of this study impact research on student support and identity formation.

Keywords: Higher Education, Internationalization, Student Mobility, Mainland Chinese students, Cross-border students, Cross-border education

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ABBREVIATIONS

CBRC	Childhood Bilingualism Research Centre
CEPA	Close Economic Partnership Agreement
CUHK	The Chinese University of Hong Kong
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EDB	Education Bureau
ELTU	English Language Teaching Unit
EPP	English for Professional Purposes
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
GPA	Grade Point Average
HE	Higher Education
HKBU	Hong Kong Baptist University
HKU	The University of Hong Kong
HKUST	The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
KOL	Key Opinion Leader
L1	First language
L2	Second language
LingU	Lingnan University
LLS	Language Learning Strategies
MOE	Ministry of Education the People's Republic of China
MOI	Medium of Instruction
NET	Native English Teachers
PolyU	The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
PRC	People's Republic of China
QS	Quacquarelli Symonds
SAR	Special Administrative Region
SCDS	Student Counselling and Development Service
THE	Times Higher Education
UGC	University Grants Committee
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WTO	The World Trade Organization

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Background

International mobility in higher education (HE) has been exponentially expanding and on a consistent basis over the past decade. In 2015, more than four million students were enrolled in higher education institutions outside their home countries, five times more than the 0.8 million in 1975 (Indicators, 2016). This exponential growth is caused by economic factors, political change and opportunities in destinations outside of home countries. An unprecedented number of students from Mainland China pursuing English language medium higher education institutions has also been evident in recent years (Li & Bray, 2006; Li & Bray, 2007). International mobility in Mainland China students seeking higher education opportunities overseas has been an intriguing trend and overseen notable changes since the late 70s. Historically, the international mobility trajectory in China witnessed a very small number of Mainland Chinese students being sent abroad for higher education before 1978. After the end of the Cultural Revolution, the open door policy began attracting internationals students to Mainland China in 1978. At the same time, more Mainland Chinese students were seeking higher education opportunities in both non-English speaking countries (i.e. Soviet Union, Germany and France) and English-speaking countries (i.e. The United Kingdom and The United States). Hence, a more balanced development with two-way flows of students was seen. While, higher education institutions in English-speaking countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada, have been top choices among Mainland Chinese students, Asian countries like Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan, are in fact popular choices among Mainland Chinese students because of the geographical location, culture and custom, and language in some part of Asia like Singapore, Taiwan where their lingua franca is Mandarin. International students undeniably make contributions to academic communities but they often come across difficulties and daunting challenges in adapting themselves to new learning contexts, and linguistic and socio-cultural environments.

Hong Kong is a society which is both familiar and strange to Mainland Chinese students because of the unique and different political and sociocultural relationships in comparison to their homeland. Previous research has mainly focused on the motivations for choosing Hong Kong as their higher education destination (Li & Bray, 2007; Bodycott, 2009; Ma, Kim & Lee, 2007; Wong,

Cheung & Yuen, 2019) but how they adapt to the university and host destination have been under-researched. Thus, the research study takes place in one of the eight government sponsored universities, The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), a bilingual university which is a favored choice among mainland Chinese students. Despite the cultural and social differences, many of these mainland Chinese students outperform local Hong Kong students in academic subjects with the exception of English Language. With English being a medium of instruction in all Hong Kong higher education institutions, mainland students face tremendous challenges and difficulties in the aspect of language, not only English but Cantonese, the official language and lingua franca used in Hong Kong. In addition to language, acculturation has been quite often reported in previous studies as a significant adaptation stressor (Yu & Zhang, 2016; Pan, 2011; McCrae, Yik, Trapnell, Bond, & Paulhus, 1998; Ward & Kennedy, 1994). As mentioned earlier in the section, Hong Kong is a familiar yet strange society to Mainland Chinese students. The social and cultural issues relating to their adaptation and conflicts they face in Hong Kong are more complex when compared with living and studying in other countries. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the issues and concerns mainland Chinese students have in the English learning environment including their adaptation in the bilingual environment, in particular the use of English in learning and the use of Cantonese in their daily communication with fellow students as well as the acculturation experiences in this unique society and institution. The findings of the study, through obtaining in-depth understanding of mainland students' experience, expectations, challenges and how they overcome the challenges, would be helpful to university educators and English Language Centers to derive ways to support their transition (in terms of curriculum development and student support). In addition, the nature of existing tensions, conflicts and disputes between "mainlanders" and "Hongkongers" is no longer just scholarly concerns but is of general political and social concerns. Greater awareness of the issues that mainland Chinese students face in their initial stage of tertiary education should also be generated, and useful information on factors that might have had an impact on a Cantonese and English environment could be offered.

1.2 Aims of the study

In the early 1970s, during the Cultural Revolution, 15 Mainland Chinese students were sent abroad from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing (Dodwell, 2018). When the Cultural Revolution ended in 1978, the top Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping made a decision to send out more students

to study abroad as a goal to reform China and open up foreign exchange (Li, 2017). 52 students were then sent abroad. The trend began growing quickly and over 700 students went abroad to study in in the late 1970s. The increase in the 1980s and 1990s was gradual but a huge jump was witnessed in the early millennium. According to the Ministry of Education in China (2018), 39,000 Mainland Chinese students went abroad to study in 2000 and five years later the number increased almost four-fold to 118,500. The rapid increase was more evident between 2008 and 2018. In 2008, 179,800 students went abroad and the number was nearly one million in 2018 (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2018). Popular host destinations were no longer only the United States and the United Kingdom, but Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, Italy, Japan, Germany, France and Belgium.

Apart from those aforementioned popular host destinations, a small fraction of them chose to study in Hong Kong. The trend was more popular in the millennium and the phenomenon of students from Mainland China rejecting offers from top Chinese institutions like Peking University or the University of Tsinghua to venture to Hong Kong was witnessed more frequently in the last decade (Asia Dialogue, 2019). Such strong desire to come to Hong Kong to study may well have been driven by prima facie, a yearning for international exposure because of the unique position of Hong Kong, very different from China. From a British colony to part of China but governing as a special administrative region under a "one country, two systems" policy, its colonial background shaped Hong Kong to become a multicultural city, with a sophisticated fusion of east and west (Blakemore, 2019). They foresee having "international exposure" will widen their career and further studying opportunities beyond Hong Kong (Mortlock, 2019). To many people living in Mainland China, Hong Kong is a sophisticated and international city and mixes with Confucian and British ethics (Hinsbergh, 2020). Many also hold the assumption that in many ways, Hong Kong is similar to Mainland China since Hong Kong was returned to China two decades ago. However, they are unaware that Hong Kong is distinctively different in terms of culture, lifestyle and education system. Just as any students who study abroad, they are likely to face linguistic and socio-cultural adaptation issues. This study aims to enrich the understanding of Mainland Chinese students' initial adaptation experiences at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), and thus generate suggestions on how university educators could support and ease the transitional period more effectively - and reduce tensions, conflicts and disputes between "mainlanders" and "Hongkongers".

The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) has long been one of the popular host institutions for Mainland Chinese students. According to the Times Higher Education *(*2019), CUHK is one of Asia's most international and prestigious universities and is ranked second in the top 5 universities in Hong Kong. Its major uniqueness and attractiveness compared to the other 3 of the top 4 universities in Hong Kong, namely the University of Hong Kong (HKU), the University of Science and Technology (UST) and City University of Hong Kong, is the medium of instruction (MOI). CUHK is the only government-funded universities in Hong Kong which offers bilingual education. CUHK has since its establishment in 1963 maintained and upheld bilingual education as a principle. The unique bilingual education at CUHK aims to "*optimize the effectives of teaching and learning, allowing for flexibility, and to ensure that CUHK graduates have a very high level of proficiency in both languages*" (Chinese University Hong Kong, 2006, n.p.). Therefore, investigating Mainland Chinese students' adaptation experiences at CUHK, this "bilingual" institution, would be somewhat different to carrying out the same research at another institutions in Hong Kong as this group of students would presumably have recognized CUHK is not an English-language institution. With such enriched understanding, a study, carried out at CUHK will provide insights for other universities in Hong Kong or neighboring regions which accept this group of students and thus help to alleviate the challenges they may face.

1.3 Institutional Setting

Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) considers three universities in the Special Administrative Region (SAR) – the University of Hong Kong (HKU), the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) – to be among the best in Asia (Yeung, 2017; Top Universities, 2017). The three universities now rank in the QS top 60 universities in the world (Top Universities, 2017). These three universities are among the nine that deliver courses primarily in English. CUHK is the only bilingual university which uses both Chinese and English as a medium of instruction.

Established in 1963, the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) is one of the leading universities in the region and the second oldest university in Hong Kong. Its uniqueness lies in the bilingual education (the use of both Chinese and Chinese as the medium of instructions in teaching and learning), which no other tertiary institution in Hong Kong offers. In an effort to enhance the internalization of higher education, and to diversify its student body, CUHK has, since

1997, admitted non-local students, in particular Mainland Chinese students under the National Colleges Entrance Examination System (also known as Gaokao) (CUHK, 2015). The students admitted are among the brightest in China. Previous studies mainly focused solely on Mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong's English medium universities, which claim to use English as a Medium of Instructions like the University of Hong Kong (HKU) (Gao, 2007; Xu, 2015). So far, little attention has been devoted to investigating Mainland Chinese students' experiences in a bilingual university, which makes CUHK a unique place to carry out the research as it is the only bilingual university in Hong Kong. Findings are likely to enrich academic understanding of the adaptation experiences of Mainland Chinese students in the host university.

Although a number of Mainland Chinese students were admitted to the University of Hong Kong (HKU) before 1949, there was a hiatus following the Revolution. The substantial arrival of Mainland Chinese students at Hong Kong's tertiary institutions became a significant phenomenon about 20 years ago (CUHK, 2019). In 1999, the University Grants Committee (UGC) Hong Kong and Hong Kong Jockey Club jointly financed high school graduates with excellent academic results to pursue their undergraduate study in Hong Kong (UGC, 2010; CUHK, 2019). In 2002, Mainland Chinese students were allowed to undertake undergraduate study at Hong Kong tertiary institutions through self-financing (UGC, 2010). In 2003, under the Close Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), simplified procedures and opening up more fee-paying places in more provinces and cities in China further drove an increase of Mainland Chinese students applying to study in Hong Kong's tertiary institutions (Trade and Industry Department of HKSAR, 2012). The rising number of applicants in that short period time proved that Hong Kong is a popular choice for undergraduate study to many Mainland Chinese parents or their children. The rising number in fee-paying students implies that they were mostly born and raised in privileged family conditions when compared with other Mainland Chinese students.

In addition, continued swelling tensions in Hong Kong and universities campuses, especially at CUHK and HKU, has made Hong Kong a challenging place to study and adapt for some Mainland Chinese students. Increased Mainland China-Hong Kong economic and social integration in the past years have brought resistance and hostility against the Chinese government and mainlanders (Ma, 2015). Deteriorating human rights and tightened political control from Beijing since 2008 has further aggravated the "anti-China" sentiments in Hong Kong (Ma, 2015). With the tensions

related to the political gap between China and Hong Kong and the struggle for democracy among Hongkongers, the relation between Hongkongers and mainlanders is likely to be unprecedently difficult and tough.

1.4 Background of the Research Participants

According to the Ministry of Education (2019), the peak of Mainland Chinese student enrollment in Hong Kong could be seen between 2012 to 2018. In 2016, 11,548 Mainland Chinese students came to Hong Kong for tertiary education, tripling the number of 3319 in 2005 (University Grants Committee, 2016). This study involved a group of Mainland Chinese students who entered CUHK as freshmen in the academic year of 2016-2017. A brief historical and contemporary overview of Mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong will be reported in Chapter 2. This section provides some background information about Mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong. The details of recruitment and selection criteria will be reported in Chapter 3 on Methodology.

Watkins and Biggs (1996) argued "Chinese students" or "Chinese learners" have long been assumed to be a homogenous group when they study abroad. In that connection, the same assumption has also been applied in Hong Kong that students in Hong Kong and from Mainland China are treated as homogenously the same or of little or no differences. In fact, these are Western stereotypes. The two groups are similar only in ethnic background, but enormously different in many aspects including the way they were raised and nurtured, the environment they were raised in, and the culture they have been exposed to. In Hong Kong, Mainland Chinese are often distinguished as both foreign students and local students as they are from Mainland China, where there evidently exists large sociocultural and linguistic gaps between Mainland Chinese students and their local (Hong Kong) counterparts (Clark & Gieve, 2006; Hu, 2005; Stephens, 1997; Kumaravadivelu, 2003). For example, culturally speaking, with Hong Kong's colonial history and background, the culture and living style in Hong Kong is hybrid, British elements and features have heavily influenced the city, evidently differentiating Hong Kong from Mainland China. In the linguistic aspect, even though the Hong Kong government has, since 1997 after the return of Hong Kong to China, put heavy emphasis in Putonghua, the official languages in Hong Kong remain Cantonese, English and Putonghua and the most commonly used language for daily communication and social interaction remains Cantonese. Mainland Chinese students in Hong

Kong are categorized into the international/non-local[1] students. In the recent admission scheme at the university of this study, all candidates have to quality for first tier top universities in China by sitting for the National College Entrance Examination in order to be eligible for applying to tertiary institutions in Hong Kong. Therefore, those Mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong are often considered 'elite' students as a majority of them have received scholarships as a result of their outstanding and remarkable academic achievement. What is more, these students come from relatively more well-off or middle-class urban families whose families are professionals or entrepreneurs. These families are particularly keen on investing on their children's education as money is usually not an issue. Unlike typical Hong Kong students, their ability to be admitted by universities in Hong Kong is not determined by status, financial capabilities or background, but solely their academic performance. To their peers in Hong Kong, the assumption that Mainland Chinese students come from distinctive family, social and education backgrounds exists.

1.5 The Researcher's Role

Having taught at CUHK since 2012, I have witnessed a growing number of Mainland Chinese students. I have also witnessed or experienced first hand accounts on how they adapt linguistically and socio-culturally. During my career at CUHK, I have been teaching at the English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU) which offers English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and English for Professional Purposes (EPP) courses for all undergraduate students in all disciplines. Throughout the years, I have taught many students who came from Mainland China. As a lecturer, I often take part in social functions (e.g. English Evenings) where I have had opportunities to chat with this group of students. I have also noticed, from our conversation, that Mainland Chinese students, who have chosen to study at CUHK, have been driven by a desire to experience a more western style education and living style in a place where they feel is closer to their home and have more cultural similarities as their home country. However, their desire was often met with frustrations when they tried to integrate in the institution

[1] In Hong Kong, the term "non-local students" refers to those who apply through a different admission route. These entrants are required to pay a higher tuition fee. According to the Education Bureau (EDB), persons who hold student visa or entry permit are categorized as non-local students. Similarly, the term "international students" refers to those who apply to study in Hong Kong and are required to hold student visa or entry permit. Mainland Chinese students could fall in either category because they are not local residents in Hong Kong and require student visa or entry permit to study in Hong Kong although Hong Kong is a part of China. Due to the historical background of Hong Kong, even Chinese nationals must obtain a visa when travelling to Hong Kong.

and the city. The problem has over the years become more serious and challenging as "anti-mainlandisation" social movements and political turmoil have escalated in recent years. Therefore, I have a strong desire to investigate the adaptation experiences faced by this group of students when they first arrive at CUHK in order to sought ways to help them adapt to CUHK in the remaining years.

1.6 Research Questions

This study investigates the linguistic and socio-cultural adaptation experiences Mainland Chinese students face in the first year of their study at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). The primary research questions are as follows:

1) What are the reasons for Mainland Chinese students studying in Hong Kong having chosen Hong Kong as their higher education destination?
2) What linguistic and socio-cultural experiences do they face in their first year study at the Chinese University of Hong Kong?
3) How do they deal with and manage the experiences they face in Hong Kong?

This study adopted a mixed methods research approach to answer the three research questions and to investigate Mainland Chinese students' adaptation experiences from multiple perspectives. Quantitative data collection was used to gather a macro picture of respondents' background information and to form a general view of their adaptation experiences in order to answer the first research question. Qualitative research method was used at a later stage to capture a more micro perspective on the factors that could have an impact on the students' experiences. Together, the three questions looked into their adaptation experiences, how they dealt with them, and specifically what coping strategies or approaches they adopted or used.

1.7 Methodological Approach in this Study

As this study aimed to investigate the sociocultural and linguistic adaptation experiences Mainland Chinese students face in the first year of their study at CUHK, the study made use of mixed methods. It commences with a positivist (and quantitative) worldview and then moves towards a more naturalistic (qualitative) perspective, valuing both objective and subjective data at different stages to underpin worldviews. As an insider perspective can be valuable and allows an extended engagement with research participants – needed to capture a much more detailed, in-depth and

holistic understanding - this study adopted an ethnographic research method. While the study was not a full-scale ethnographic research, it aims to "*convey the subjective reality of the lived experience of a particular group of individuals*" (Pole & Morrison, 2003, p.16) with a narrower focus.

1.8 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter 2 reviews existing research on internationalization of higher education, international students' experience in English and non-English speaking countries and the use of push-pull model to identify the factors which influenced the mobility Mainland Chinese students. This theoretical framework introduced by Lee has over the years been used to understand international student flows (McMahon, 1992), the decision or motivation to study abroad (Maringe & Carter, 2007) and the choice of study abroad destination (Chen, 2007; Eder, Smith & Pitts, 2010; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Muntasira, Jiang & Thuy, 2009; Yang, 2007). The theoretical framework has guided me to focus on gathering data broadly relevant to this study and enabled the exploration at macro and micro levels. Chapter 3 describes the methodological approach and research adopted in this study to obtain evidence and thus address the three research questions. Chapters 4 to 6 present findings about the research participants' reasons for choosing Hong Kong as their higher education destination, the linguistic and socio-cultural adaptation experiences they faced upon arrival and how they dealt with and managed these experiences. Chapter 7 concludes with the major findings and insights gained from this study and propose directions for future research.

Chapter 2
Literature Review

2.1 Background

Hong Kong, one of the financial and cultural hubs in Asia, has been a favorable higher education destination, witnessing an increase from 355 (0.4% of the total student number in 2003 to 4950 in 2017, accounting for 4.9% of the total enrollment in University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded universities (UGC, 2017; Yu, Bodycott & Mak, 2019). With Hong Kong being a special administrative region of China, it is important to understand the background of Hong Kong and why students from mainland China are considered international students when Hong Kong is indeed part of China.

During the Opium Wars between Great Britain and China between 1839 and 1860, China was forced to cede Hong Kong Island and a part of Kowloon to Great Britain and signed, what the Chinese have long regarded as "an unequal treaty" with Great Britain. Hong Kong, being a colony of Great Britain from 1841 to 1997, was under British rule. When the lease over the New Territories ended in 1997, Hong Kong was returned as a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. Under the doctrine of "One country, Two systems," Hong Kong was allowed to continue to govern itself and retain the existing systems for at least 50 years. Because Hong Kong is a Special Administrative Region and is granted the rights to govern itself including law and order, even citizens of China require to apply for visas when visiting Hong Kong. Hence, students who study in universities in Hong Kong are considered as international students.

Hong Kong shares many similar traits with Mainland China but there are also many differences in terms of language, education system and culture. The official language in both Hong Kong and China is Chinese, but Chinese itself is made up of different dialects, for example Cantonese and Putonghua. Almost all provinces in Mainland China use Putonghua while some have their own dialects to communicate. Only one province in Mainland China (Guangdong) uses Cantonese to communicate; yet people in Guangdong communicate in both Cantonese and Putonghua. In Hong Kong, the "usual spoken language[2]", a term used by the Hong Kong Government in a dispute over 'Cantonese is not an official language' in 2014, of which 88.9% of the population in Hong Kong

[2] Cantonese is a dialect but in government documents and publications, the term "language" is used to describe Cantonese. Cantonese is also a term used to describe a native in Canton (Guangzhou).

use Cantonese as their first language (GovHK, 2016). That is to say Cantonese is the "usual spoken language" used in daily communication and interaction among locals, in the Legislative Council or even in courts in some special circumstances. In short, Hong Kong, being the former colony of the Great Britain, has two official languages (Chinese and English), while Chinese[3] is the only official language in China. According to the Official Languages Division in Hong Kong, "*Chinese and English are the official languages of Hong Kong…the Government produces important documents in both English and Chinese…Simultaneous interpretation in English/Cantonese/Putonghua is made available to meetings of the Legislative Council…*" (Civil Service Bureau of HKSAR, 2018, n.p.). The term "language" is often used to describe both written language and spoken dialect in Hong Kong. To further clarify, the official written languages of Hong Kong are Chinese and English whereas the official spoken languages or dialects are English, Cantonese and Putonghua.

2.2.1 Internationalization and Globalization

The two terms "internationalization" and "globalization" often bring confusion in usage. Scholars like Scott (2000) and Knight (1994) believe the two terms can be used interchangeably but at the same time, Altach and Knight (2007) suggest the two terms should not be confused. Therefore, to better understand the history and development of internationalization in higher education, it is important to clarify and clearly define the definitions of globalization and internationalization and draw the relationship between them. Before looking into the history of internationalization in higher education, it is important to clarify the concept of internationalization and globalization in order set the background for a better understanding of the rationales and motives of higher education institutions in adopting internationalization. The movement of students internationally or across borders is a part of internationalization and mobility of students across country is a core element of internationalization of higher education. Globalization, on the other hand, has the common association of international and intercultural concerns which plays a part in higher education (Holford, 2013).

[3] The term "Chinese" holds the meaning of written Chinese and spoken Chinese (Putonghua) in China.

2.2.2 Definition

Various scholars defined the term "internationalization" differently. DeWit and Hunter (2015) suggested "*the most commonly accepted definition of internationalization*" (p.45) is "*the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education*" (Knight, 2008, p. 21). An expanded definition of internationalization, which focuses on internationalization of higher education as a means to an end, is further defined as "*the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society*" (de Wit, Hunter, Howard, & Egron-Polak, 2015, p. 29). Globalization, on the other hand, "*reflects not only the processes of global competitiveness between, for example the great market blocs of the United States, the European Union and the Pacific Rim nations, but it also involves intensified collaboration* (Scott, 2000, p.4).

Globalization and internationalization are related but not the same. Knight (1999) linked globalization and internationalization as dynamically linked concepts. Globalization serves as "*the catalyst*" while internationalization is "*a response in a proactive way*" (Knight, 1999, p.350). Globalization, in the context of education, is a process of interaction and integration among education, students, faculty and research (Altbach & Knight, 2007), driven by international collaboration and engagement and aided by information technology (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Lauder, Brown, Dillabough & Halsey, 2006). Internationalization could be seen as a result of globalization in academic trends. Globalization thus boosts the cross-border mobility of students (Varghese, 2013). Internationalization in higher education includes policies and practices undertaken by academic systems, institutions and government to cope with the growing global academic environment (Altbach & Knight, 2007). To put it in context, internationalization of higher education can be seen as a response to globalization and part of the extensive student mobility across countries, in particular English-speaking countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, etc. Then term, thus, can be seen in narrow terms as a process or mechanism for transferring students around the world (Rumbley, Altbach, & Reisberg, 2012). Internationalization has been linked more closely to higher education discourse in recent years in response as a channel to open up knowledge transfer (Bennell & Pearce, 2003), international marketing opportunities (Mortimer, 1997), research collaboration (Teichler, 2004), physical

mobility across countries (students, academic staff, administrative staff, etc.) (Teichler, 2010; Kehm and Teichler, 2007) and second language acquisition (particularly English) (Warner, 2011).

Historically, internationalization originated in human beings' ability to trade and travel across the seas and borders. Scholars and researchers define and interpret the term "internationalization" differently based on different perspectives and variables, depending on the role it plays in society and stakeholders, beneficiaries, rationales, outcomes, and even countries (Knight, 2015). The term is not new and has been used in different aspects such as political science, governmental relations but not really used in the education sector until the rise in the popularity of international education and student mobility in the 1980s. The term is used more frequently to discuss the international dimension of higher education (Knight, 2009). Although the term internationalization in higher education was used by scholars in the 1990s and even earlier, it began to appear more frequently in research literature and studies in the 2000s. In the early 1970s, scholars defined 'internationalization' as the process whereby organizations increase their involvement in international operations (Masum & Fernandez, 2008). More definitions were then seen throughout the 1980s, before internationalization in higher education surged. In the 1990s, the term was being defined more in-depth as "*the process of adapting firms' operations including strategy, structure, resource, etc. to international environments*" (Calof & Beamish, 1995, p.116). In the early years of the current millennium, the term "internationalization" was being used more frequently in relation to higher education as student mobility continued to grow rapidly.

The 21st Century has shown that higher education institutions around the world are becoming increasingly internationalized and students, at the same time, are becoming increasingly mobile. The forces of globalization have been affecting higher education systems directly and indirectly (Carnoy, 1999; Pang, 2013), creating an increasingly competitive global marketplace for higher education (Douglas & Selin, 2012; Eras, 2016). Major educational changes include pushing governments to expand and increase spending on higher education, increasing the student enrollment in higher education to satisfy the demand of higher level of skills in labour force, producing a more educated labour force and improving the quality of education by comparing results internationally (e.g. through TIMSS and PISA studies), emphasizing more on English as a foreign language and communication skills and mathematics and science curricula and making use of information technology in teaching and learning (Pang, 2013; Carnoy, Hallak & Caillods, 1999;

Daun, 2002). On-going social inequalities due to the narrow economic policy making in education has impact on higher education worldwide (Kromydas, 2017). In addition, recent political development in the UK and the US has begun changing the overall landscape and future of higher education. The Brexit referendum vote is expected to affect EU applicants while President Trump's administration to impose limits on Chinese students and expel Chinese graduate students with ties to China's military schools has brought different challenges international student mobility. Yet, the development has brought opportunities to scholars, researchers, students and institutions outside of the UK and US to exchange, improve teaching, learning and research and drive forces to social changes and development. The pace of globalization is likely to continue unfalteringly and the forces from political to economical purposes would transform the fabric of higher education (Mitchell & Neilsen, 2012).

Internationally mobile students are defined as those who study in foreign countries where they are not permanent residents (UNESCO, 2014). International student mobility has become an important part of globalization in the aspect of tertiary education. While the history of student mobility can be traced back to at least as early as the 1880s (Legrandjacques, 2019) when students sought for higher education opportunities in the United States, Europe or England, the number has drastically increased in the early 20th century (Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007). English-speaking identity of the destination seems to be an independently significant factor of international student mobility (Bista, 2018). According to the Institute of International Education (2017), the top destinations for the 4.6million international students were the US (24%), UK (11%), China (10%), Australia (7%), France (7%), Canada (7%), Russia (6%), Germany (6%) and other countries (23%). In the academic year of 2016/2017, international student enrollment in the US increased to a record high of 1.8 million. The UK received the majority of its international students from the five countries: China (97,850), the US (28,125), Malaysia (18,400), Germany (18,205) and India (18,105) (Bista, 2018; Project Atlas 2017). Australia received most of their international students from the five countries: China (114,006), India (44,775), Nepal (15,211), Malaysia (14,721) and Vietnam (13,949) (Bista, 2018; Project Atlas 2017).

Internationalization and globalization have strong impacts on higher education because higher education is "*both an actor and a reactor to these processes*" (Van, 2013, p.73). Scholars and academics attempted to explain the complexity of the two terms and by setting clear definition

between the two terms more specifically in the context of higher education (De Wit (2009), Knight (2008), Scott (2006), Teichler (2004), and Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley (2009). Knight (2004) defined how internationalization as "*a series of international activities such as academic mobility for students and teachers"; "the delivery of education to other countries through new types of arrangements such as branch campuses or franchises using a variety of face-to-face and distance techniques*" (p.6). Initially, globalization was discussed from economic perspectives but scholars and intellectuals began seeing the need to interpret the term in both economic and cultural perspectives as it impacts all aspects in society (Singh & Papa, 2010). Higher education institutions are among the main agents of global convergence (Sharipov, 2020; Marginson & Wende, 2007; Singh & Papa, 2010). Globalization and internationalization are reinforcing ideas in higher education. Globalization has in fact accelerated internationalization activity within universities, providing the external motivation and push for accelerated institutional internalization. At the same time, the intensification of university internationalization activity reinforces accelerated globalization (Maringe & Foskett, 2012; Liu & Rhoads, 2011). In other words, globalization can be most suitably defined as "*it breaks down barriers and conflicts and connects institutions across the world making universities in every country visible to each other, facilitating knowledge flows, values on global learning, and creation of new opportunities for advanced graduates"* (Singh & Papa, 2010, p.4). Globalization impacts all walks of life in society and higher education is one of the most affected aspects by global trends and economics.

2.2.3 History of Student Mobility

The international element of higher education between the 18th century and World War II was based on mainly the international exchange of ideas and information through seminars, conferences, and publications while cooperation among international scholars was rare (Knight & De Wit, 1995). The Governor of Hong Kong, Sir Frederick Lugard in the early 1900s witnessed an influx of young people from China pursuing western style higher education in North America and Europe. At the same time, other nations like Germany were planning to establish universities in China. The University of Hong Kong (HKU) being the first tertiary institute in Hong Kong was then established in 1911 to retain potentially qualified students in Hong Kong. HKU in 1912 opened its door for admission in the two faculties, Medicine and Engineering and admitted 54 students a four-year curriculum when the population of the city was 457,000 (Census and Statistics Department of HKSAR, n.d.). At its establishment, HKU was purely a teaching institute,

admitting a small number of students from Hong Kong. Other students being admitted were mainly from China, and other British colonies including Malaya, Singapore, etc. (Cunich, 2012). A small number of academically qualified students from rich families who could not get a place at HKU studied abroad in countries such as France, Japan, Taiwan, Germany, the United States, and Great Britain. A very small number of students went to Mainland China to study as a number of universities had already been established in the late 1800s and early 1900s including Tianjin University (originally known as Imperial Tientsin University) (1895), Jiaotong University (1896), and Peking University (originally known as Imperial University of Peking or Imperial Capital University) (1898) (Hayhoe, 2007). However, Chinese higher education began struggling during the Communists' reforms and Cultural Revolution which took place from the late 1940s to the early 1970s, paralyzing its developing higher education (Hayhoe, 2007).

The trend of international student mobility began expanding after World War II, when the Cold War broke out, mainly in the United States and the Soviet Union, the two superpowers that arose from the war. These two countries both had strong intentions and plans to promote international education exchange and cooperation in order to understand more about the world, hence increase their influence in the global stage (Knight & De Wit, 1995). They also competed with each other, and higher education became a form of soft power, incorporating and transmitting differing ideologies and notions of knowledge. Soft power is a concept coined by Joseph Nye, and the concept has gained popularity particularly in China and (Nye, 1990; Nye, 2004; Wang & Lu, 2008). Soft power is defined as "*the ability to shape what others want by being attractive*" (Wang & Lu, 2008, p.426). The attractiveness depends highly on intangible resources, such as culture, ideology, and institutions (Nye 2004; Paradise, 2009; Smirnov, 2014; Wang & Lu, 2008). China has, over the years, aimed to strengthen its soft power using education. Each year, students are sent abroad to study and return with great knowledge and skills for potential soft-power gains (Bislev, 2017).

The increase of student mobility was further witnessed in the 1960s and 1970s when a growing number of mobile students moved from the 'Global South' to the 'Global North' for higher education. At that time, higher education was expanding rapidly in countries/regions such as the USA, Western Europe, Canada and Australia which began putting more development funds into higher education (Knight & De Wit, 1995) as these countries realized the importance in expanding their political and economic power, thus invested vigorously in higher education. In the 1980s,

the European countries and Japan began prospering both in economic and politics. At the time, the United States had largely dominated the research in higher education. Both the European countries and Japan began investing heavily in Research and Development to compete with the US (Knight & De Wit, 1995). At the end of 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, the USSR collapsed and Japan and the European countries appeared to be developing rapidly in higher education, including putting effort to diversify higher education systems, establishing a more compatible, transparent, and competitive higher education system at a regional level, improving the quality of higher education through internationalization, etc. (Shin, Postiglione & Huang, 2016; Deem, Mok & Lucas, 2008). At the same time, the global environment moved into a dehegemonized world (Knight & De Wit, 1995), meaning the emphasis on globalization of economics, social and political relations and of knowledge was strong and urgent (Knight & De Wit, 1995).

The emphasis on globalization, a phenomenon of increasing global interconnection, stressed the importance of international cooperation and exchange in higher education. Through cooperation and exchange, students may become more resilient and adaptable in economic, cultural and social changes. In the era of globalization, success can only be achieved through a high-skilled, motivate and globally competitive workforce (Meyer, Bushney & Ukpere, 2011; Price, 2010; Rasool, 2006), leading to the emergence of new markets, including an international higher education market (Ross & Gibson, 2007). Other scholars (Olaniran & Agnello, 2008; Van Vught, 2009) describe the challenges faced in globalization leading to reforms in higher education systems, pushing higher education institutions to increase their effectiveness, competitiveness, quality of graduates, and production of new knowledge.

With the growing importance of English, the most widely studied language in the world and a lingua franca used as business and trade began flourishing between English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries, a growth in international student mobility was seen in the 1990s to 2000s (Guruz, 2011) in particular to English-speaking countries. International student mobility across international borders for higher education is likely to continue rising and the number of international students enrolling in higher education institutions is projected to grow to 6.4 million by 2025 (OECD, 2009).

2.2.4 Misconceptions

Internationalization is becoming a more complex and significant process as it matures. At the same time, internationalization is becoming a more confused and understood concept. It is wrong to describe everything in relation to the long distance, intercultural, global or international world to internationalization (Rosyidah, 2020). Thus, internationalization can lose its meaning and direction if not properly defined. 'Internationalization' is used in many different aspects and has been used to describe anything or everything that appears in a worldwide rather than local context. While many scholars have attempted to interpret the term 'internationalization' closely in context with higher education, a number of myths about internationalization of higher education are commonly seen. It is crucial to identify the myths because stakeholders (educators and higher education institutions) must be aware of the intended and unintended consequences brought by internationalization as there are other driving forces such as competitiveness, rankings and commercialism (Knight, 2011). These driving forces form the degree to which a higher education is achievable and the extent to which it is considered useful for society.

The five myths identified by Knight (2011) about internationalization are: (1) foreign students as agents of internationalization of institutions; (2) international reputation as a proxy for quality; (3) international institutional agreements as a measure of success; (4) international accreditation as a measure of quality; and (5) global branding as a measure of institutional success. De Wit (2011, p.246) also identified nine myths about internationalization of higher education, of which a few are similar to Knight. The nine myths include: (1) internationalization is similar to teaching in English; (2) internationalization is similar to studying abroad; (3) internationalization is similar to teaching an international subject; (4) internationalization means having many international students; (5) internationalization can be implemented successfully with only a few international students in the classroom; (6) intercultural and international competencies do not necessarily have to be assessed as such; (7) the more agreements an institution has, the more international it is; (8) higher education is international by its very nature; and (9) internationalization is an objective in itself. Some of the nine myths about internationalization of higher education identified by Knight and De Wit coincide with the current situation – the means appear to have become the goal.

De Wit (1995) and Knight (2011) both witnessed the nine myths about internationalization of higher education and advocate the importance of identifying and clarifying these myths as they are

often common and misleading assumptions. They also believed that it is crucial to ensure that some but not all universities which are working towards internationalization are moving forward in the right direction. However, the right or best direction is a matter for debate; while the views of Knight and De Wit are convincing, there is still a need for further discussions.

2.3 Push-Pull Factors

Choosing a study abroad destination can be complex and is often influenced by different push and pull factors (Lee, 2014). Back in the 1960s, Lee (1966) began studying and explaining the factors which influenced the movement of people by the push-pull model in the theory of migration. The theoretical framework introduced by Lee has over the years been used to understand international student flows (McMahon, 1992), the decision or motivation to study abroad (Maringe & Carter, 2007) and the choice of study abroad destination (Chen, 2007; Eder, Smith & Pitts, 2010; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Muntasira, Jiang & Thuy, 2009; Yang, 2007). The theoretical framework suggests that individuals identify factors in the country of origin and of destination that either pull (attract) or push (repel) them. Then – very importantly – the individuals evaluate these factors and determine whether the resultant force is one that leads to migration or to staying where they are. Hence, the theory has guided me to focus on gathering data broadly relevant to my research and guide the research effort, enabling the exploration at different levels, including macro and micro.

2.3.1 Push Factors

Student mobility can be influenced by many factors. One key factor is the lack of access to higher education among many countries, particularly in Asia (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Another factor is students' dissatisfaction towards educational opportunities in their home country which exerts pressure to leave and pursue education elsewhere (Albatch, 2004). Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) conducted a study to examine the factors influencing international student choice of the host country. They identified other key push factors which influenced the decision; these included attractiveness of courses and universities overseas, viewing overseas courses as better than local ones, difficulty in gaining entry to higher education in their home country, particular courses not being available at their home country, desire to develop a better understanding of the west and an intention to migrate. The international student mobility trend can be explained by the push factors within the home country that initiate students' decisions to undertake study overseas.

2.3.2 Pull Factors

Meanwhile, the pull factors identified by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) included knowledge and awareness of a host country, personal recommendations, cost issues, environment, geographic proximity, and social links. As for the pull factors which influenced the decision on the host institution, findings concluded that institutions' reputation for quality, market profile, range of courses, alliances and coalition, offshore teaching program, staff expertise, degree of innovation, use of information technology, size of alumnae base, and promotion and marketing efforts.

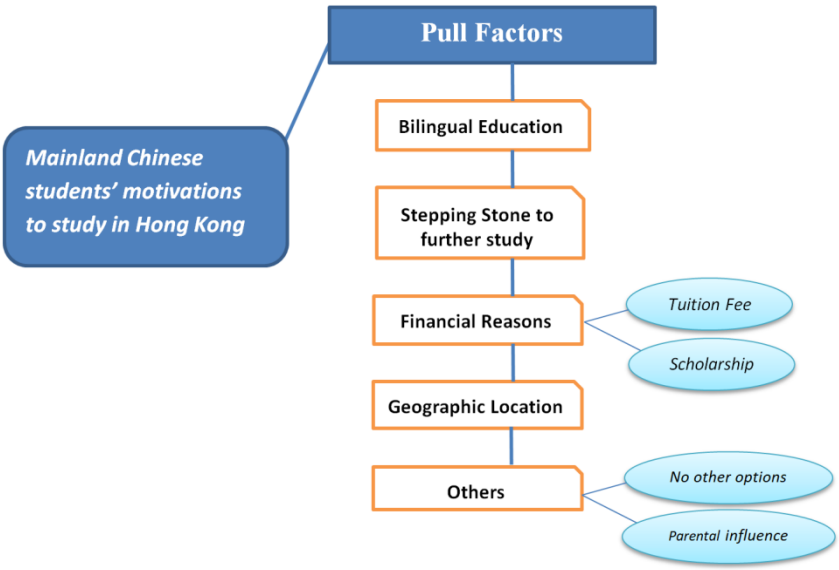

Figure 2.1: The Pull Factors of Mainland Chinese Students' Motivation to Study in Hong Kong

2.4 International Students Abroad

International students comprise a sizable portion of the student bodies of many universities around the world, accounting for 5.3 million worldwide (UNESCO, 2019). More than half of these international students enrolled in higher education institutions in six countries: the US, the UK, Australia, France, Germany and the Russian Federation. Prominent sources of international students were mainly from China, India, Germany, Republic of Korea, Nigeria, France, Saudi Arabia and several Central Asian countries (UNESCO, 2019). International students' experiences are important for the students themselves, for university administration and for research communities. The section looks at international students' experiences overseas.

2.4.1 International Student Mobility

Being the favorite higher education destination, international students studying in the US bring a vast amount of advantages to the country including favorable revenue of $12 billion (Lee & Rice, 2007), diverse student populations, new perspectives in teaching, learning and research, and increased social and cultural awareness (Lee & Rice, 2007; Bevis, 2002; Harrison, 2002; Rees, n.d.). The US is currently the most popular choice of destination for international students while the UK is second in the list (Guardian, 2014) (see Appendix 1). Although the US is a favorite choice for international students, there was a decrease in its international student population for the first time since 1971 in 2004 (Institute of International Education, 2004; Lee & Rice, 2007). Although international student enrollment gradually increased, a decline was seen again a decade later in 2016 with a drop of 3.3% in international student enrollment (Redden, 2020). Lee and Rice (2007) investigated the phenomenon of the drop of international student enrollment and undertook a study to explore the issue in-depth. They found this decline in enrolment was related to cultural discrimination, which created a hostile studying environment within universities and communities of the host country. Cultural discrimination refers to rejecting a person or a group of people with similar background due to the differences in cultural values and beliefs. For example, people who live in China and Hong Kong who have the same ethnic background and identity but differ drastically in cultural values and beliefs.

Previous studies focusing on international student experiences attributed their difficulties to 'adaptation' implying a negative notion that these international students are in a disadvantaged position, and thus they must cope and integrate (Bevis, 2002; Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen & Van Horn, 2002; Klineberg & Hull, 1979; Pritchard & Skinner, 2002; Zhao, Kuh & Carini, 2005; Lee, 2010). Different reasons leading to the decline in international student enrollment have included burdensome immigration regulations (Altbach, 2004), language and cultural adjustment (Wu, Garza & Guzman, 2015), difficulty in integrating with school life (Long, 2013; Milian, Birnbaum, Cardona & Nicholson, 2015), being treated like uninvited guests (Jackson & Heggins, 2003), and the lack of support in academic procedures and living arrangements (Kher, Juneau & Molstad, 2003). Adding to these perceptions, international students are often seen as a "threat" to the US economy and considered as "problems" (Rhoades & Smart, 1996; Dodwell, 2019; Fish, 2020), blaming them for economic woes and even encouraging violence against them (Fish, 2020). In 2011, the Obama Administration allowed more

international students to stay after their graduation to find internship opportunities and full-time jobs in the US (Fox News, 2011). Many politicians and citizens seemed to be discontent with the new policy. They argue these opportunities set room for the pool of international students to compete for jobs with the local graduates, putting existing unemployment rate at higher risk and allowing them more opportunities to apply for permanent residency and get medical welfare. In addition, the continual increase of international enrollment in universities all over the United States has given rise to criticism targeting international students. Domestic students have made prejudiced and improper comments against international students on social media and even student newspaper at university (Redden, 2012) such as "*There is no right to a job or immigration here. Their home countries certainly would not return the favor to American students*" (Chen, 2012, n.p.). Recent studies have discovered the decline is contributed to international students having to endure travel bans, executive orders, detrimental regulatory actions and xenophobic rhetoric (Redden 2020).

Although international students commended teaching quality and international recognition in the US and the UK, international student mobility is increasing evidently in many non-English speaking host countries (see Appendix 2). These popular host countries include South Korea, Japan, Germany, France, United Arab Emirates, and Hong Kong. This trend suggests that university reputation is not the sole factor to attract talents today. International students are expecting far more than just university reputation. In short, when deciding where to pursue higher education, they consider services and support provided by the university, strong international community, promising career perspective, a return on their education investment (Ali, 2015), living environment and scholarship and possible adaptation issues they might be facing in host countries.

2.5 Chinese Students Abroad

2.5.1 Driving forces of international student mobility

In the last few decades, an intensified globalization process drove higher education towards greater international involvement, in which students' access to higher education in other countries has been expanding in terms of volume, scope and complexity (Altbach & Knight, 2006; Healey, 2007). International student mobility is a central part of internationalization of higher education while

recruiting non-local students is a part of the process to achieve internationalization (Li & Bray, 2007). A growing number of secondary/high school graduates seek opportunities to study in tertiary institutions outside their home countries (Healey, 2007), in particular English speaking countries with China being the largest source country "exporting" foreign students (Li & Bray, 2007; Altbach & Knight, 2007; Choudaha & Chang, 2012; King, Findlay & Ahrens, 2010; Bohm et al., 2004).

More than a century ago, China began sending its students and scholars to study abroad (Hui, 2005; Wang, 2003). At that time, students who were sent abroad to study were sponsored and funded by the government. The main purpose was to bring home skills and knowledge which would be necessary in building a strong country. With the change in international political climate in the late 1960s, the central government amended policies related to sending students and scholars to study abroad (Williams & Evans, 2005; Griner & Sobol, 2014). In the 1978, Deng Xiaoping, the late Chinese premier of the central government increased the quota of sending students and scholars abroad. Over the next three decades, the number of students and scholars studying abroad had skyrocketed from 700 in 1978 to over 6.8 million studying in 108 countries and regions all over the world (Ministry of Education, 2006; Chen & Zimitat, 2006; Marginson, 2001; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). In the 1990s, with the impact of China's economic growth and in response to globalization, the country had aspirations and demands of increasing the number of university graduates. In response to the dramatic economic development, higher education in China expanded remarkably. Between 1996 and 2002, the enrollment jumped fivefold from 1.43 to 5.45 million (Li & Bray, 2007) and the number reached 40 million in 2019 (Xinhua, 2020). Even with the dramatic increase of places in higher education, supply yet could not meet the very high demand. At the same time, students who could not safeguard a university place because of their university entrance examination results resorted to higher education opportunities outside China. Popular destinations included Northern America, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, France, Australia, Japan and New Zealand (Kennedy, 2010).

Furthermore, the one-child policy introduced by the China PRC government in 1979 had allowed families to allocate resources on a single child, and hence opened up more opportunities and choices for their child to decide whether to study abroad or locally. In a survey conducted by China's National Statistics Bureau in 2001 revealed that over 60% of Chinese families invested

one-third of their income in their children's education (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2001). The household expenditure on children's income came second only to the expenses on food. The older generation in China perceived that a good future is only guaranteed by good education (Duan 1997; Jiang & Ashley, 2000). Graduates with foreign degrees are considered better than local graduates, have better employment prospects (Zhang, 2001; Fam & Gray, 2000; Gareth, 2005), and are more competitive. Whether these single children secure a university place in mainland China is no longer a factor of studying abroad because many parents have all the financial resources required. The 21st century has been a period of economic prosperity and economic boom in mainland China resulting in an increasing number of middle-class and wealthy families sending their children to study abroad.

2.5.2 Determinants of Chinese students studying abroad

Mazzarol and Soutar (2001) through their study found students who chose to study outside of Mainland China believed that overseas programmes were much better in terms of quality in comparison with programmes offered by local universities. In addition, they catered to a desire to understand and learn more about foreign cultures and to any intention to migrate or stay in the countries which they studied upon graduation. Four motives were found to have driven mainland Chinese students to study abroad: academic, economic, social and cultural; and political (Li & Bray, 2007; Chao, Hegarty, Angelidis & Lu, 2019; Lo, So, Liu, Allard & Chiu, 2019; Cebolla-Boado, Hu & Soysal, 2018; Sun & Hagedorn, 2013). In addition, economic motives, which included access to scholarships and living expenses, are common factors that influence Chinese students' decision-making process (Abubakar, Shanka & Muuka, 2010; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Gong & Huybers, 2015). Zheng (2003) found in his study that students' desires to choose to study overseas were determined by economic, educational and personal factors. Some of these factors do in fact overlap with the ones found in other studies. The number of international students studying abroad has been growing rapidly and is expected to continue to do so. Factors contributing to this include the main source countries' growth in household wealth, the demand for quality education, and the growth of interest in studying abroad (Bohm, Davis, Meares, & Pearce, 2002).

2.5.3 Determinants of choosing Hong Kong as a destination

The rising number of mainland students seeking to pursue their undergraduate studies in Hong Kong, a previous British colony which has retained considerable autonomy as a special

administrative region within China (Li & Bray, 2007), has become a trend seen in the past years. "One Country, Two Systems" is a constitutional principle originated by the former China PRC leader, Deng Xiaoping, ensuring Hong Kong to the rights of exercising a higher degree of autonomy, retaining its own capitalist system, and sustaining the way of life for at least 50 years after the handover in 1997. The original idea of the system intended to tighten the ties, bonds and linkages between Hong Kong and Mainland China. Yet, the situation had intensified several years after the handover with tensions and conflicts continued growing and escalating. Particularly the huge gap in national identity sparked the conflicts and tensions (Ching, 2019). Such adaptation issue is unlikely to be faced by other international students going abroad to study, for instance, Singaporean students going to study in Australia or Malaya students going to study abroad in the US/UK.

In response to the surging number of Mainland Chinese students seeking higher education opportunities in Hong Kong, in 2006 the Hong Kong government introduced two schemes to relax the number and barriers to mainland youth in applying for places in undergraduate studies and to support mainland students overcome the obstacles and challenges they face in Hong Kong (Yuen, 2007). Nevertheless, the assistance in the barriers and challenges faced by these mainland students in universities remains a weakness. In 2015, for the first time in the last decade, the number of mainland applicants applying to universities in Hong Kong dropped significantly (Steger & Hu, 2015). Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU), The Baptist University of Hong Kong (HKBU) and Lingnan University (LingU), the three of eight publicly-funded universities in Hong Kong, had received fewer applicants in the school year of 2015-2016 (Steger & Hu, 2015). The drop in the number of applicants has drawn a connection between falling interest in studying in Hong Kong, the current political turmoil and the conflicts between "mainlanders" and "Hongkongers" in recent years (Steger & Hu, 2015). Some Mainland Chinese students studying in Hong Kong voiced that political tension in Hong Kong and discrimination against them had triggered them to look for alternatives (Yu & Zhang, 2016; Cheung & Wong, 2020). Students in China are also provided with more opportunities to apply to other countries for higher education. Education consultants also commented on a change in perspective when parents and students inquire about studying in Hong Kong. In the past they were concerned about the opportunity of getting into certain universities and programmes; now they are more concerned about political developments

in Hong Kong, safety issues, political demonstrations, recent chaos in universities, and students' mental health (Steger & Hu, 2015).

Compared with other major destination countries like the USA and the UK, Hong Kong has a comparatively small tertiary education sector, pro rata to the Hong Kong student age population. Yet, Hong Kong has in the last decade become a popular choice of cross-border education for mainland Chinese students mainly because Hong Kong, a place which is close to mainland China with some renowned English-medium universities with international standards and global linkages in the region, such as the University of Hong Kong (HKU) (Gao, 2008), the University of Science and Technology (HKUST) and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). HKU, CUHK and HKUST are the three University Grant Committee (UGC) funded universities in Hong Kong admitting the largest numbers of mainland students: 2876, 2772 and 1696 respectively in 2014 (University Grants Committee, 2015). These three universities are also famed for their strength in research and diverse academic staff (Yung, 2004; Postiglione, 1998). In 2019, Times Higher Education (THE) featured five of the best universities in Hong Kong and HKU, CUHK and HKUST were the famed as the top three. While HKU is the oldest higher education institution in Hong Kong and has over the years attracted talents students from mainland China and the rest of the world, CUHK is the only university operating on a college system and adopting a language biliterate (Chinese and English) and trilingual (Cantonese, English and Putonghua) (CUHK, 2015) policy. "Biliteracy and Trilingualism" is a language policy used in Hong Kong education system since the handover in 1997. This language policy aims to nurture students to become proficient in writing English and Chinese (biliteracy) and their ability to communicate in Cantonese, English and Putonghua (Wang, 2019; Evans, 2013). CUHK has also been featured by Times Higher Education (THE) as one of Asia's most international and prestigious universities with some of the most prominent research hubs, such as the Childhood Bilingualism Research Centre (CBRC) (Times Higher Education, 2019). HKUST, though established only 25 years ago, has been extremely successful in internationalization. HKUST is one of the most internationalized universities in Hong Kong with a strong global networking and partnership in science and technology and rising continuously in Asian and worldwide university rankings, attracting elite students from all over the world. The three universities together admitted 7,344 Mainland Chinese students, (University Grants Committee, 2015) which made up of 63% of the entire mainland student recruitment in 2014 (see Appendix 3).

What is more, many mainland parents who are reluctant to send their children overseas would consider Hong Kong as an ideal destination since studying in Hong Kong universities would still consider as an internationalized study experience with the advantage of being relatively closer to their hometown (Kirkpatrick, 2011). In addition, compared to Hong Kong where crime, violence and discrimination rates are relatively low, many parents are becoming increasing worried about the safety and security issues in overseas countries such as the USA. The USA has, over the years, appealed to Mainland Chinese students for their academic excellent higher education institutions as well as inspiring curriculum (Chen & Jordan, 2016). Yet, with the increasing number of incidents related to kidnapping, abduction, university/college gun violence, racism, parents have begun questioning whether it is safe and wise to send their children to traditionally favored countries like the USA. Between 2009 and 2012, three Chinese students were gunned down at the University of Southern California (USC) in Los Angeles, USA. Chinese students had long been stereotypes as wealthy and docile and thus they often became the targets of robberies and crimes (Chi, 2014). China's Ministry of Education reported that 31 Chinese students were reportedly killed in 2016 while studying abroad (Guo, 2017). These reported deaths were related to homicide, campus gun violence, kidnapping, abduction, hate crimes, etc. Two most recent incidents had again reignited concerns among parents of mainland Chinese students about safety and security included 2017 Las Vegas shooting and the disappearance of 26-year-old scholar Zhang Yingying from China who was supposed to begin her study at University of Illinois in the academic year of 2017 (Shen, 2017). These distressing incidents raised concerns and second thoughts among parents in Mainland China about sending their children so far from home to study (Li, 2019; Coughlan, 2018). As such, Hong Kong, with its close proximity to Mainland China and relatively safer environment, becomes an ideal and preferable host destination among mainland Chinese students and their parents. Despite the press and media reporting safety and security issues about studying abroad, it was found otherwise in this study as safety or security issues were not a factor when choosing CUHK and Hong Kong as a host destination. Last but not the least, President Donald Trump ordered a tightening of rules and visa policies for foreign students going abroad to study in the USA (Meckler, 2018). Combined with on-going political conflicts and trade wars between the US and China, studying in the US will become more expensive, tedious, and difficult in the near future, especially for those who consider Hong Kong a stepping stone to going abroad

for postgraduate study. Thus, Hong Kong may become an optimal destination for Mainland Chinese students to pursue postgraduate study in the future.

2.6 Adaptation and Adjustment

The acceleration of globalization and internationalization has increased the accessibility and mobility to move across borders for education. When entering an unfamiliar culture setting, cross border or mobile students have to adapt and adjust to the new environment. Adaptation and adjustment are two concepts which are often used in research investigation on migrants and sojourners' acculturation. A person who is new to an environment may adjust or integrate well to the new environment while another person may experience maladjustment or being marginalized.

Adaptation can be categorized into psychological adjustment and sociocultural adjustment (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Ward & Searle, 1991). Psychological adaptation means to "*feeling of well-being and satisfaction*" while sociocultural adaptation refers to "*the ability to fit in or negotiate interactive aspects of the host culture*" (Ward & Kennedy, 1993, p.3). In an empirical study investigated by Ward and Searle (1991), it was found that homesickness, loneliness, personality (e.g. extroversion, internal locus of control), life changes, social support, and life difficulty significantly impacted sojourners' psychological adaptation. Cultural distance, challenges, language proficiency, host-national contact, and emotional fluctuation were variables contributed to sociocultural adaptation.

Lysgaard, a Norwegian sociologist investigated the over 200 full-bright scholars' sojourn experience in an empirical research (Ward, Okura, Kennedy & Kojima, 1998). He illustrated the findings through a process following a U-shape curve below:

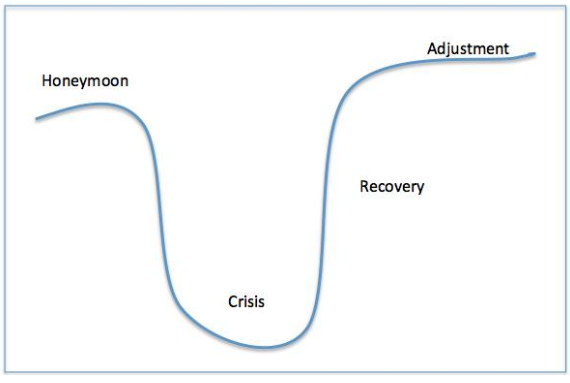

Figure 2.2: Oberg's U-shape curve hypothesis

The four stages are: honeymoon, crisis, recovery and adjustment (Oberg, 1960). In the honeymoon stage, sojourners enter in a brand new or unfamiliar environment and culture. Sojourners usually feel excited, curious, exciting and optimistic. At this stage, sojourners generally maintain contact with their compatriots. In the case of Mainland Chinese students, they tend to befriend with counterparts who come from Mainland China or nearby regions. The duration of this stage can be a few days and up to several weeks or even several months. Gradually, with the increase of contact and acquaintance from the host country or culture, student sojourners begin seeing the differences in terms of culture and lifestyle between their home and host country or culture. Hence, culture shocks such as stress, frustrations and confusions arise (Oberg, 1960). Sojourners then enter the initial adjustment stage where sojourners have generally adapted to the environment such as getting around university, accommodation, transportation, etc. Although student sojourners may not have completely acculturated and adapted to the linguistic environment, they basically have no significant adaptation issues.

2.7 Adaptation Issues

2.7.1 Culture Shock

Oberg (1960), known to have come up with the concept "culture shock", illustrated four stages which sojourners go through in a foreign culture/community/country/environment: honeymoon, crisis (or culture shock), recovery and adjustment. The concept "culture shock" is defined as "*the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse*" (Oberg, 1960, p.177) and "*the psychological and emotional reaction people experience when they encounter a culture that is very different from their own*" (Oetzel, 2009, p. 126). Common symptoms of culture shock include anxiety, depression, loneliness, insomnia, negative attitude towards host people and culture, as well as long to be with conationals (Adler, 1975; Church, 1982; Oberg, 1960; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Oetzel, 2009). Several researchers proposed that culture shock does not only take place when sojourners study abroad, but also when they return to their home country (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Yale, 2017; Chang, 2009). Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) further expanded Oberg's U-curve hypothesis into a W-curve model below and suggested that the adaptation process takes place not only during the initial stage of studying abroad but when sojourners return to their home country.

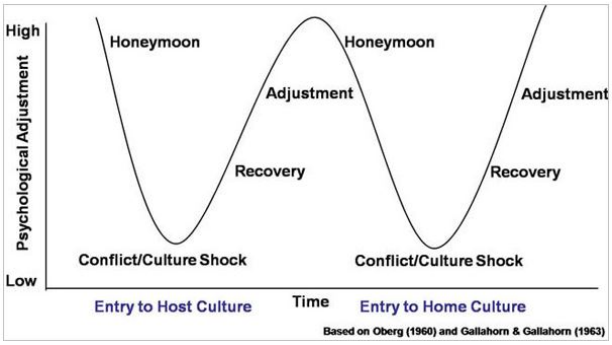

Figure 2.3: W-curve model

Chang (2009) further explained that the repeated culture shock from the initial entry (a new environment) to the return to the original environment (home country) is mainly caused by the lack of preparation, both physical and psychological. While many sojourners psychologically predict, research and prepare themselves for the adaptation experiences or challenges they may face, very few feel it is necessary to prepare themselves for the return to their home country. Therefore, culture shock does not only take place when international students arrive at a totally new environment, but it could possibly be encountered again a few years later when they return home.

U-curve and W-curve models are most widely used today in the field of intercultural adaptation/adjustment despite other alternative theories emerging; however, these curve hypotheses have also been challenged and criticized (Church, 1982; Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001) on the validity of curve propositions. Ward and Kennedy (1996) conducted an empirical study on a group of Malaysian and Singaporean students' adjustment in New Zealand. Interviews were carried out at the initial (within the first month) stage and subsequently after six and twelve months of their arrival. Findings from their study found that sojourner faced culture shock or other adaptation challenges severely in the initial period and at one year after their arrival in the host destination rather than in the middle period (e.g. six months after their arrival). Qualitative data further supported statistical findings in the study. According to the survey carried out in the study, 68% of students felt negatively in their first month experience and emotion. Instead of experiencing the positive or honeymoon stage suggested by Oberg (1960) and Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963), sojourners in fact faced and dealt with stress, depression or adaptation/adjustment difficulties most significantly in the first three months of their arrival in the

host destination. The process began improving starting the fourth to the sixth month of their arrival (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001).

Other theories or models proposed in subsequent years to investigate the process sojourners or cross-borders go through in a new environment. In particular, Kim (1988, 2001) found that adaptation process is much more complicated and cynical which can be explained by the "Stress-Adaptation-Growth-Dynamic" model. Kim (2001) argues that adaptation is "*phenomenon of individuals, who through direct and indirect contacts with an unfamiliar environment, strive to establish and maintain a relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationship with the environment*" (Kim, 2008, p.363). People who experience challenges or struggle in an unfamiliar environment tend to maintain their own original identity by "disequilibrium" and develop ways to maintain harmony within the new environment in order to adapt and adjust.

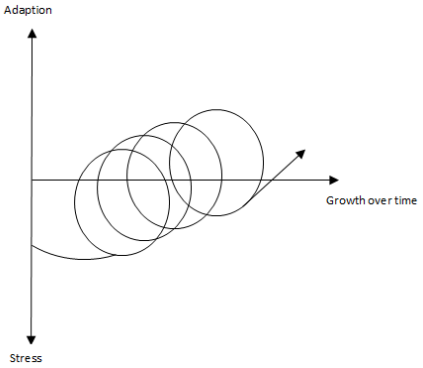

Figure 2.4: The 'Stress-Adaptation-Growth-Dynamic'
Adapted from Kim and Ruben (1988)

2.7.2 English (L2) Proficiency

The ability to communicate effectively plays a crucial role in adaptation. The lack of sufficient knowledge and competency in linguistic knowledge affects the adaptation experiences of cross-border students. Linguistic competency could either inhibit or hinder people from getting to know or communicate with each other. According to Zhang and Goodson (2011), the two mostly frequently cited factors in relation to student sojourners' sociocultural and psychological adjustment in the United States are English proficiency and social contact with Americans. Student sojourners who felt their English, a person's second language (L2), proficiency level as high or

competent were more open, confident or willing to take the initiative to converse with people from different cultures and background since English is a lingua franca used in both English and non-English speaking countries (Csizer & Kormos, 2008; Regan, Howard & Lemee, 2009).

Researchers have found that L2 proficiency is of significant importance to making new friends or developing friendships in the host culture, thus adapting to the host culture easier. Wiklund (2002) found in her study that immigrant students' social networks have direct and close relationship with their L2 proficiency. Similarly, in a national survey student conducted by Ward and Masgoret (2004b), the lack of sufficient English proficiency was the main reason international students in New Zealand had in developing friendships with host nationals. Bennett, Bennett and Allen (2003) hypothesized that student sojourners with high English proficiency tend to have advantages in developing friendships in host cultures because their level of intercultural sensitivity is generally higher. However, this assumption was challenged by Jackson (2008a, 2009, 2010b, 2011d) who conducted multiple ethnographic studies of short-term student sojourners from foreign countries (e.g. England) at a Hong Kong university between 2001 and 2009 as well as a number of mixed-method studies in long-term exchange students from 2009 onwards. Findings from these studies do not show a direct correlation between L2 competence and intercultural competence. English has always had a unique status in Hong Kong given its former colonial status and is a gateway of international trade (Le & Le, 2011) and mobility. High proficiency in English is a requirement rather than option. Yet, being able to use English proficiently in their study and living in Hong Kong or another place do not imply understanding its culture. Jackson (2008a) further found in her study that even those student sojourners and exchange students attained high proficiency in their English, their intercultural sensitivity "lagged far behind". Thus, Jackson (2008a) proposed offering courses or assistance before, during and after the study abroad program because these courses or assistance would better prepare stthe udent sojourners for the possible adaptation issues and guide them to have better awareness of intercultural competences. These courses or assistance provided could also help student sojourners to put together realistic expectations and goals and effective English learning strategies to deal with challenges they would possibly meet when studying abroad (Jackson, 2006, 2011a). Based on findings from researchers, it can be concluded that high level of competence in intercultural sensitivity and linguistic competence would make student sojourners' adaptation experiences smoother and easier.

2.7.3 Identity

Identity has over the years been to be one of the most common adaptation issues among immigrants, sojourners, migrant students and cross-border students (Berry, 1997; Berry, Phinney, Sam & Vedder, 2006; Baumeister & Muraven, 1996; Kahle, 1983; Ward, 2006; Murray, Gao & Lamb, 2011; Jackson, 2008; Darvin & Norton, 2014). Identity is developed over time through life experiences, acquaintances one meets and the environments one engages in (University of Technology Sydney, 2009). This is likely to be more challenging for Mainland Chinese students because most people would regard China and Hong Kong sharing many cultural similarities. However, many Mainland Chinese students and Hong Kong students view their cultural identity differently. In most parts of the world, people from China and Hong Kong are grouped under the ethnic group "Chinese". While Mainland Chinese students would consider their cultural identity as "Chinese", majority of people in Hong Kong, especially the younger generation, would consider themselves as "Hongkongers" (Chor, 2019; Cheng, 2019). Compared to Mainland Chinese students, Hong Kong students tend to have a weaker sense of national identity and the trend is seeing a drop with ongoing social unrest and political turmoil intensifying negative feelings toward China. Cultural identity crisis has thus become an adaptation issue for Mainland Chinese students as they find it hard to understand the negative sentiments students in Hong Kong have towards the Chinese government and Mainland Chinese students. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the two groups are nurtured and education in a quite different education and civil education style. While Mainland Chinese students have been cultivated and educated from a young age to be patriotic, Hong Kong students have a distinct view of national identity and patriotism. This is evident by Hong Kong youth calling themselves "Hongkongers" instead of Chinese. Since the handover of sovereignty in 1997, the Central Government has intended to bring a stronger tie between Hong Kong and Mainland China. Yet, it has been more perceptible that people in the two places are growing farther apart instead of closer. Moreover, people holding dual identities (i.e. British citizenship and Hong Kong permanent resident status) make up the largest group in Hong Kong (Ng, 2007). This group of Hong Kong people had immigrated to foreign countries between the late 1980s and returned in late 1990s and early 2000s. Hence, the sense of identity, in particular national identity, is much lowered than those who grew up in Mainland China.

2.7.4 Discrimination/Prejudice

Research has suggested that adaptation experiences in relationship to prejudice and/or discrimination among students affect the development of identity during student sojourners' experiences in host culture (Guilfoyle & Harryba, 2011; Novera, 2004; UNESCO, 2013). Discrimination/Prejudice is an adaptation issue which has attracted concerns over the years. For example, in Australia discrimination/prejudice from domestic students and unexpectedly academic staff are especially serious among international students from India (UNESCO, 2013), Seychelles (Guilfoyle & Harryba, 2011) and Indonesia (Novera, 2004). Identifying strategies to facilitate the adaptation experiences among international students should therefore be prioritized.

2.7.5 Social / Political Events

As mentioned in earlier section in this chapter, Hong Kong is a special administrative region of China and is operated according to the "One Country Two Systems" (Chen & Lo, 2017) principle, under which the political relationship between Hong Kong and mainland China is inherently hierarchal:

> *The imbalance between China and Hong Kong, cast in a 'central versus local' relation…underlies the former nearly unilateral political influence over Hong Kong's political development in the aftermath of 1997* (Tse, 2007, p.235).

Such "unilateral political influence" from mainland China has been a principal source of tension in Hong Kong (Xu, 2018). Continuous tension and conflicts between the so-called "pro-China" and 'pro-democracy' camps have been more apparent in the last decade. The two camps take a drastically different view of democracy and political orientation. The former supports the policies of the central government towards Hong Kong while the latter supports upholding the distinct cultural, political and civil liberties (Chen, 2017) under the "one country, two systems" framework for at least 50 years without change. The "pro-democracy" camp advocates increased democracy (i.e. the universal suffrage) as guaranteed by the Basic Law under the "one country, two systems" framework. Yet, Beijing's increasing political interference is said to have contributed to the erosion of Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy. Thus, various social and political incidents, aimed at safeguarding Hong Kong against political infiltration from the Chinese Government, have taken place.

While many among the younger generation (the post-90s generation) in Hong Kong appear to value autonomy, democracy, freedom and constitutional government more than material values (i.e. money) (Xu, 2018), having been nurtured with imaginations of Western-style liberal democracy (Fowler, 1997), Mainland Chinese students have a very different political upbringing. The education system in China ensures students are well-aware of historical conflicts between China and the West (Hail, 2015). In response to the Tiananmen Incident in 1989, the Chinese government launched a nationwide propaganda campaign of "patriotic education", which aimed to ensure loyalty in the population. It also allowed the Communist Party to continue ruling on the basis of a non-Communist ideology (Zhao, 1998). On-going political and social incidents in Hong Kong have intensified differences, tension and conflicts between the two groups of students.

From 2012 the protest against the implementation of "National Education", a series of protests and demonstrations has taken place in Hong Kong. In 2014, Umbrella Movement, protests aroused by a decision made by China that it would allow elections of the Chief Executive and Legislative Council leaders in 2017 with the condition that candidates were pre-approved by the Chinese government (BBC, 2019; Kaiman, 2014; Ng, 2014). Tens of thousands of protestors, of whom most were students, camped on the streets in the heart of Hong Kong, Central District, occupying and blocking major roadways and streets, and demanded universal suffrage and the right to elect leaders without the Chinese government's interference (Guardian, 2014; SCMP, 2014; BBC, 2014; NBC, 2014). The increasing interference from the Chinese government since 2012 has induced a wave of "anti-mainlandisation' (Xu, 2015; Xu, 2018), a swelling negative sentiment among Hong Kong people, in particular the younger generation; this has further intensified cross-border tensions and Hong Kong people's sense of a distinct cultural identity (Wu, Ou & Jordon, 2020; Wang, Joy, Belk & Sherry, 2019; Ma, 2015). This has hit hard in Hong Kong, not least in universities, where mainland students made up over 11% of the total student population (Tiezzi, 2015). In 2016, a furious backlash was sparked after Eugenia Lushan Ye, a mainland student, attempted to run for the post of social secretary for the new executive body of the Student Union at the University of Hong Kong (HKU). A video revealing Eugenia as a former member of Communist Youth League of China was broadcast on HKU student-run Campus TV. Following the video and viral reports on different social media and newspaper, Eugenia was overwhelmed by questions during the election campaign debate about her Communist identity and alleged links to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) membership (Chen, 2015). CPPCC is "*an*

organization in the patriotic united front of the Chinese people, an important organ for multiparty cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, and an important means of promoting socialist democracy in China's political activities (China Daily, 2020, n.p.). People in Hong Kong generally hold the assumption that members who belong to CPPCC are very patriotic and have elite background and status. The incident aroused China's media, in particular the People's Daily, the official paper for Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, to openly comment that life for mainland students and graduates living and working in Hong Kong is "getting tougher" because of the tensions triggered by the ongoing social and political turmoil and events in Hong Kong (EJ Insight, 2015). Eugenia Ye wrote an open letter in early 2016 stating her choice of choosing Hong Kong as a higher education destination was prompted by the city's freedom and liberalism (Chen 2015). The Eugenia Ye incident further fueled "anti-mainland" or "anti-China" sentiment. While critics said accusations against Ye were unfair, "anti-mainland" or "anti-China" sentiment continued to brew and eventually reached new heights. Frequent protests against mainland tourists with banners and disparaging names (i.e. locust, barbarian, go back to China) were signs of "anti-mainlandization" or "anti-China" (Ma, 2015; Tiezzi, 2015). The "anti-mainland" sentiment at the same time sparked a parallel backlash from mainlanders especially in universities in Hong Kong. With mainlanders outside of Hong Kong feeling outraged by the treatment of their compatriots, some warned that "McCarthyism" was infiltrating Hong Kong's schools, in particular higher education (Tiezzi, 2015). At the same time, many mainlanders inside and outside Hong Kong decried Hong Kong people being spoiled and arrogant and argued that mainlanders were in fact the source of Hong Kong's prosperity. In 2017, the CUHK democracy wall incident further displayed the increasing "anti-mainland" or "anti-China" sentiment. The incident was sparked by a mainland student being filmed tearing down pro-democracy posters that read "Fight for Our Homeland. Fight for Hong Kong Independence" on the CUHK democracy wall and confronted by student union representatives at CUHK (Yeung, 2017; Cheng, 2017; Chan, 2017). The video went viral on Facebook overnight. With the increased conflicts and clashes between the two groups, adaptation certainly concerns many Mainland Chinese students and Mainland Chinese officials. In 2019 and early 2020, the fiery clashes at CUHK and around Covid-19 respectively sparked additional "anti-China" or "anti-mainland" sentiment, causing some concerns on cross-border students studying and living in Hong Kong. On November 13, 2019, Hong Kong police escorted Mainland Chinese students from

CUHK to the pier near the university and prepared a police vessel to send them to a safe location (BBC, 2019; Cheng, 2019). Critics complained that Mainland Chinese students received special treatment while other foreign students had to find their own routes/ways to leave Hong Kong due to safety concerns. The latest Covid-19 also aroused another round of "anti-China" or "anti-mainland" sentiment. Since the outbreak of Covid-19, some international leaders, in particular Donald Trump, have repeatedly claimed that the virus originated in China – (which China has repeatedly denied). This has again refueled "anti-China" or "anti-mainland" sentiment. With ongoing social unrest and political turmoil, it is likely Mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong will face more challenges in their adaptation more than ever.

2.8 Adaptation/Coping Strategies

Research on cross-border student mobility focuses particularly on adaptation and change strategies (Kiley, 2003; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). It has been found that the initial stage (e.g. first year of arrival) is the most stressful period for sojourners, new immigrants, mobile students, or migrants. This is the period when newcomers experience multifaceted environmental and personal changes in the host destination/culture (Chan, 1998). Educators are increasingly concerned about cross-border students' adaptation needs but quite often university educators are professionally ill-equipped to provide transitional help, assistance or support (Yuen, 2011). While educators are experts in their own subjects and disciplines, they often lack training and experiences in providing pastoral care or support and appropriate pedagogies to provide help and support to these cross-border students. Therefore, scholars and professional bodies suggested equipping school administrators and frontline teachers with the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes by providing professional development courses regularly, especially at schools and institutions with high intake of cross-border or international students (Yuen, 2011; Pan, 2013; Varghese, 2008).

2.8.1 Strategies used by schools

To rectify the absence of existing and effective supporting strategies and mechanism to cross-border students, many schools in Hong Kong, in particular primary and secondary schools which have a large cross-border student population, are presently taking initiatives to provide assistance to this group of students. For example, teachers would travel to Shenzhen (the border town between Hong Kong and Mainland China which provides a large supply of cross-border students to Hong Kong) to hold parents' meetings and seminars, offer extra English tutorials after school

or on Saturdays, give transitional allowances to cross-border students such as using their native language, Putonghua (L1) to express ideas when engaging in class activities or discussions, customize writing and discussion topics which include life experiences and cultural issues and events in host destination/culture and providing "individualized attention" to cross-border students (Yuen, 2011). Recent trends have also witnessed that social groups are formed in secondary schools according to the grade/year of study, class or after-school activities to assist cross-border students' transitional and adaptation period (Ding & Stapleton, 2015). With these active initiatives taken by primary and secondary schools, universities, on the other hand, seem to be passive in tailor-making approaches to assist cross-border students' adaptation.

2.8.2 Strategies used by individuals

The first year of study at university away from their home is a notoriously difficult, pressuring and challenging period for Mainland Chinese students. A change from a largely teacher-centered and exam-oriented education system (Frambach, Driessen, Beh & Van der Vleuten, 2014; Gui & Cheng 2018; Wang, Zhang & Chen, 2018; Wu & Zhang, 2016; Zhao, 2018) to a new and demanding western-style academic system and environment (Yu & Zhang, 2016) is not the only adaptation experience they face. Mainland Chinese students also have to cope with a totally different and challenging social environment, adapt to a new cultural and linguistic environment (especially when English is used as a medium of instruction in most higher education institutions in Hong Kong and Cantonese is used as a spoken dialect in Hong Kong), and manage their own life and studies in a similar yet different culture (Cheung, 2013; Yu & Zhang, 2016). It was mentioned in earlier section that although Hong Kong is a part of China, language use, culture and lifestyle is largely distinctive. Traditional Chinese culture influenced by Confucianism was a virtue of life for ancient Chinese people and it continues to influence Chinese culture today. Confucian philosophy provides teachings and guidance to maintain social harmony and order and imparted the structure of Chinese society should focus on "*rituals, familial respect and obligation, worship of ancestors, and self-discipline*" (Berling, 2020, n.p.; Yang, 1991; Brown, 2019). Thus, Chinese culture today still puts heavy emphasis on "social community group goals and harmony" (Fan & Ashdown, 2014). When these mainland Chinese students are set away from a familiar "collectivistic living and studying environment", their adaptation to an unfamiliar culture would require tremendous effort (Fan & Ashdown, 2014; Wu, 2005; Vyas & Yu, 2018). If such

adaptation is unsmooth or rocky, their confidence in adapting to the environment may be reduced which impacts their adaptation into the new academic and social environment negatively.

Strategies individuals take to deal with challenges they face vary from individual to individual. Researchers have found various strategies used by sojourners when they enter a brand new culture and environment thus face and adapt to changes.

2.8.3 Avoiding or reducing contact with people in the host culture

Some sojourners resort to a "hiding" or "isolating" strategy by avoiding or reducing contact with people in the host culture to minimize conflicts (Graham, 1983; Jackson, 2008). Studying overseas opens a new window for Mainland Chinese students to see the world from a different perspective, expose to different information and values and become a global citizen (Xu, 2015). However, reality seems different from expectations. Many Mainland Chinese students, after their initial arrival in Hong Kong, begin to feel the pressure when trying to befriend and get along with local students. In particular, sensitive issues like politics are often the center of discussion. So, to avoid conflicts, Mainland Chinese students often resort to avoiding or reducing contact with local students because they realize even though Hong Kong is a part of China, the culture and lifestyle of the two places are drastically different. However, Mainland Chinese students would still maintain a certain degree of communication and contact with local students since there are different occasions where the two groups have to meet and get together, such as class discussions, group projects, and university activities.

2.8.4 Accommodating and Integrating themselves to the host culture

While some sojourners are found to engage in "passive resistance" (Xu, 2015) in the host culture, some step up to face the challenges they experience by bravely accommodating themselves to the mainstream culture. Wang (2017) found that those who are more open with higher acceptance of cultural differences find adjusting and adapting to the new environment easier. University of Technology Sydney (2009) suggested student sojourners, when they take part in exchange programs in foreign countries, to take on adaptation strategies including making effort to make friends and communicate with them in the host culture, speak the language of the country and not to worry about making mistakes, try their best to fit into the culture by staying positive and not to dwell on negative issues, and spend more time observing and understanding cultural differences.

These strategies are often used when sojourners enter a new culture and face changes when settling into a new environment.

2.8.5 Staying in contact with only compatriots from the same culture or country and with the same national identity

Some Mainland Chinese students voiced difficulties in integrating into the host culture, Hong Kong in particular, because they "*lack commonly shared experiences*" (Xu, 2015, p.8). This is a critical issue which impedes their adaptation, hence Mainland Chinese students find it difficult to integrate into the host culture, Hong Kong. In fact, a large number of Mainland Chinese students have revealed that coming to Hong Kong to study is only a strategic channel for further mobility. Whether to return to their home country or going further abroad becomes a decision which Mainland Chinese students have control over (Xu, 2015). Therefore, since the stay in Hong Kong is a merely a temporary stage in their mobility, Mainland Chinese students avoid being involved in any kind of conflicts with local students and just stay within their own group of compatriots. Students with a similar background often find it easier to get along with those in the same group because they share the same experiences and upbringing.

2.8.6 Using online social networks

The debut of social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, has over the years attracted millions of users worldwide. Since Facebook is banned in China, local social networking sites, QQ (also known as Tencent QQ) and Weibo, have been attracting users in China. In 2018, the number of social network users in China reached 616.5 million (Statistica, 2019). The emergence of social networking sites has attracted researchers and scholars from different fields to investigate on the use of social networking sites, hence better understand the practices, implications and importance among different population groups, in particular school and university students (Hamade, 2013).

Ding and Stapleton (2015) studied a group of newly arrived Mainland Chinese students at Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIED). Findings in the study revealed that the group of newly arrived Mainland Chinese student sought support through using online social networking during the first year of their study at HKIED. QQ (also known as Tencent QQ), a social media networking site, is widely used in China. QQ is similar to Facebook except it is being banned in Mainland

China. The group of students formed an online digital community to help one another manage their adaptation. From logistical problems to questions related to their studies, first year Mainland Chinese students raised questions and queries through the QQ network. Mainland Chinese students, who are in their second or senior years, actively provided the nuts and bolts with inside tips and solutions to first year students' questions. The QQ network also served as a friendship-making tool as Mainland Chinese students would arrange social gatherings like having dinner at the school together, hiking trips, etc. During the academic year, QQ took an additional role as a study group. Questions like how an assignment is done to where the lecture notes began developing into a virtual self-help and sharing platform. In fact, QQ serves not only as a virtual community for participants to discuss and share information, it also serves the role as university administrators, counselors, teaching staff, mentors, friends, or even lovers, providing informational, instrumental and emotional support for their own group (Stapleton & Feng, 2014). Though QQ is still used widely in China, WeChat, developed by Tencent and released in 2011, is more commonly used in recent years. WeChat is a multi-purpose mobile application which equips similar functions and features as QQ, except WeChat offers more assorted services, ranging from making free online voice and video calls, sending instant messages via online and/or mobile devices, and sending and receiving money and making payment through a built-in mobile payment system (Tencent, 2017). This self-emergent online peer support is a self-initiated strategy Mainland Chinese students sort to assist in their cross-border transitional and adaptation experiences while offering help and assistance to their peers.

2.9 Existing research on issues faced by mainland Chinese student in overseas

A number of research studies have been done in the last decade on language learning strategy (LLS) (Anderson, 2005; Dorneyi, 2005; Hsiao & Oxford, 2002) as well as on mainland students' language learning strategies and adaptation in universities outside of their home countries (Gao, 2007; Littlewood, Liu & Yu, 1996; Yu, 2008; Benson & Lor, 1999). Moreover, researchers like Mazzarol, Soutar, Smart and Choo (2001) have surveyed and studied the perception of mainland students as well as international students in Australia on university selections while Zheng (2003) investigated the intention of study abroad and the key motivating factors affecting their choices of selection at the Tsinghua University. These studies provide determinants and characteristics of

the sharp increase of mainland students surging to Hong Kong for higher education and contribute to the understanding of the influences and factors contributing to Chinese students' international mobility and international student mobility.

2.9.1 Language

A number of authors reveal the major concern for international students who study aboard is language barrier (East, 2001; Hashim & Zhiliang, 2003; Misra, Crist, & Burant, 2003; Sawir, 2005; Watts, 1999; Wong, 2004; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Language plays a crucial role in the academic and social aspects of international students. Both spoken and written English language challenges international students when they are studying at universities in English speaking countries like Australia, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Although Hong Kong is not an English-speaking country, the historical background of Hong Kong being a colony of the British until 1997 makes Hong Kong unique in terms of the position of English in education. Gao (2007) conducted a study on mainland undergraduates in three stages of their English learning strategy use in a Hong Kong prestigious English medium of instruction university. His studies aimed at the use of sociocultural strategies in adapting to new learning contexts to tackle academics and linguistic challenges. Most people have the mistaken perception that Mainland Chinese students have no problem adjusting to the culture and linguistic environment in Hong Kong since the two places share similar cultural and linguistic background. However, the report in the study found two major daunting obstacles, one of which is language competency (Gao, 2007). Even though the two official languages in Hong Kong are Chinese and English but the "Chinese" in Hong Kong is distinctively different from the "Chinese" in Mainland China. In Mainland China, "Chinese" is generally referred to Putonghua (spoken) and simplified characters (written) whereas in Hong Kong, "Chinese" means Cantonese (spoken) and traditional characters (written).

Similar situation could also be seen in other host destinations. Burns (1991) found that overseas students, mainly from Asian countries, had significantly greater difficulties adjusting to academic requirements and language skills. Another similar situation is seen in the United States of America, where the medium of instruction at all universities is English. In most English-speaking countries, the biggest challenge for international students, in particular second language (L2) speakers, lies in the area of English (Loli, 2012). Academic reading and writing are essential parts in higher education and international students. L2 speakers, in particular, are often not on par when

compared to local students, which can result in stress and struggle. Similar challenges faced by Mainland Chinese students when studying in English speaking countries were also reported in a number of studies. In China, Putonghua is the medium of instruction in most schools and subjects (Zhou & Sun, 2004) even in the subject of English. Some teachers would mix codes in their delivery of lessons (Zhou & Sun, 2004). Although some schools have begun offering English courses taught exclusively in the medium of English, these schools are only limited to joint-venture schools or privately organized institutions (Zhou & Sun, 2004). Mainland Chinese students' lack of exposure in English accounts for one of the major challenges they face when studying overseas.

The literature discussed earlier share many similar features found in my work. Based on the comments and feedback completed by students at the end of the course (post-course teaching evaluation) from the university where I am currently working at as an English lecturer, one of the most common linguistic issues shared among Mainland Chinese students was the difficulty in using English to conduct academic group discussion. They explained that throughout their study in high school, they were rarely offered the opportunities to engage in group discussions. Their oral speaking tasks mainly included reading aloud, recital and one-on-one question and answer tasks. Therefore, in the first year of studies, they found it extremely challenging to conduct group discussion, in addition to group project presentations. In addition to English, being unable to communicate with classmates and roommates in regular chat inside and outside class was another issue Mainland Chinese students expressed. Cantonese, being a regional variety of Chinese, is the dominant language used to communicate in most social, cultural and political occasions (Benson & Nunan, 2005; Lee & Leung, 2012; Gao, 2010). At university, local students and teachers often communicate in Cantonese. Except for a small portion of Mainland Chinese students who come from the Pearl Delta of Guangdong and Eastern Guangxi, the majority of the Mainland Chinese students cannot speak or understand Cantonese, causing social and cultural differences and difficulties in their daily communication. In addition to linguistic barriers, socio-cultural differences between the local and Mainland Chinese students also cause great contention (will be discussed in Section 5.2), not to mention some of the events being dramatized by the media, which will be discussed later in Chapter 6.

2.9.2 Cultural and Social

Though academic and language barriers are major challenges English as a second language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students face (Watkins & Biggs, 2001), cultural and social challenges also bring difficulties in the overall adaptation when studying overseas (Kirby, Woodhouse & Ma, 2001; cited in Watkins & Biggs, 2001). The cultural and social challenges are brought forward by the different educational systems. The tertiary education system in Hong Kong adopts a mixture of East and West methodologies and pedagogies (Watkins & Biggs, 2001). Ballard and Clanchy (1991) argued that ESL or EFL students emphasize heavily on knowledge seeking which they are accustomed to in their home country. On the other hand, the western teaching methodologies and pedagogies focus more in speculative and questioning approaches which could be difficult for mainland students who are used to a more reserved and reproduced education system (Ballard and Clanchy, 1991; Watkins & Biggs, 2001). Besides, ESL or EFL students, in particular Mainland Chinese students, adopt a more inocdividualist culture perspective in their education (Rosenberg, Westling & McLeskey, 2010). Students raised in this culture are expected to learn quietly in class and be respectful to their peers and teachers, so to learn more efficiently (Watkins & Biggs, 2001). In addition, these ESL or EFL students tend to work independently and lack the ability to engage in class discussion and argument; as a consequence, they have difficulty in learning to think critically and analytically (Rosenberg, Westling & McLeskey, 2010).

2.9.3 Other issues

Nevertheless, deeply rooted in the Chinese education system is the examination system influenced since the Song Dynasty (Lu & Zhang, 2008). Examination has been a critical tool to determine the success in different aspects such as the education, careers, etc. Moreover, the National Higher Education Entrance Examination serves as the instrument and one of the very few university admission criteria to select elite candidates (Yang, 2004; Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China Department of High Education, 2013). The examination focuses heavily on subject knowledge and theories rather than the ability to solve questions, think critically and analytically as well as perform practical tasks (Davey, De Lian & Higgins, 2007) compared with the western education system which places examination as only one of the many criteria for

university admission (Heyneman, 1987; Kipnis, 2001; Greaney & Kellghan, 1995; Dello-Iacovo, 2008). Thus, these major culture differences bring upon tremendous challenges for Mainland Chinese students to adapt to a more westernized higher education system.

2.10 Research Gap

Despite the work of researchers like Watson and Biggs (2001) who have conducted extensive studies in the aspect of Chinese learners in cultural, psychological and context influences, previous studies focus heavily on psychological aspects. The setting of most of these researches is conducted largely in secondary schools, thus lacking adequate research in higher education setting. In order to propose practical implications for mainland students in higher education settings, research should be done in the tertiary setting as well.

In addition, even when some of the researchers like Gao (2007) have focused in the challenges Mainland Chinese students faced in Hong Kong tertiary education, these researches have often neglected in the most important part of the overall adaptation – the transitional phase. Language barrier is only one of the many concerns and challenges mainland students face. The transition from mainland secondary school environment to Hong Kong higher education setting should be investigated in depth to help this cohort of non-local students.

Moreover, as most of these studies were done before in the late 1990s or early 2000s before the education reform in both mainland China and Hong Kong, it would be worthwhile to investigate the challenges these mainland students face after the implementation of education reforms. Furthermore, cohorts of mainland students admitted after 1997 are the outcomes of the one-child policy, so it will be helpful to study whether the social and cultural challenges have close connection to the one-child policy or not.

Apart from social, cultural and language challenges mainland students have long been under investigation, some possible problems mainland face in Hong Kong may include facing the intensified controversies between the local and mainland students, the lack of career support, language gap (both Chinese and English), financial stress and the variation of education system (Li & Bray, 2007; Gao, 2008; Mak, Chen, Lam & Yiu, 2009; Gao, 2007).

2.11 Conclusion of the chapter

This chapter has presented a brief account of the existing literature on internationalization of higher education, adaptation issues and coping strategies. Combining with my experience of working with Mainland Chinese students at CUHK, I had developed some insights of the issues that seemed to stand out and undergo changes. In the foregoing literature review, my insights were themes recurrently discussed in the findings and discussion. Accordingly, the themes would establish the a priori categories that helped shape the design of my study. The design and data analysis method of my study will be discussed in the following chapter, Methodology.

Chapter 3
Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodological approach and research design adopted to get evidence and thus address the three research questions in the study, and explains the rationale for doing so. It starts by introducing the longitudinal nature of the research with a detailed description of the learning context and institutional setting where the study took place. Next, it provides a detailed account of each stage of the research: the data collection approach, data analysis, the selection of research participants and research ethics. The last part of the chapter critically analyzes my role as researcher in the research process and outlines the steps I took to enhance the trustworthiness of my data and findings.

In response to the growing number of cross-border students pursuing their undergraduate studies in Hong Kong, this largely qualitative study attempts to investigate the linguistic and socio-cultural issues cross-border students face in the first year of their study at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). Of the eight government sponsored universities in Hong Kong, CUHK is the only university which offers bilingual education; that is using both Chinese and English as the medium of instructions in teaching and learning. It is also, for this reason, CUHK is a highly favored choice among Mainland Chinese students. The arguably special circumstances of the background and medium of instruction at CUHK provide a strong intention to carry out the study to investigate the issues Mainland Chinese students face in their initial stage of study at this university. At such, the study addresses the following questions:

1) What are the reasons for Mainland Chinese students studying in Hong Kong having chosen Hong Kong as their higher education destination?
2) What linguistic and socio-cultural experiences do they face upon arrival and throughout their first year study at the Chinese University of Hong Kong?
3) How do they deal with and manage the experiences they face in Hong Kong?

3.2 Research Paradigm

Polonsky and Waller (2014) define research as "*an activity to increase knowledge*" (p.6) while Siegler and Ramani (2009) further refine the definition of education research as a method to "*develop new knowledge about the teaching-learning situation to improve educational practice*"

(p.545). These definitions do not only resemble worldviews of research paradigm, but "*essentially matrices of deeply held assumptions or conceptual frameworks that undergird and guide research*" (Mittwede, 2012, p.23). In the same vein, educational research aims to acquire, synthesize and analyze data, in turn providing insights to institutions, educators and learners. Research paradigms are "*based on a set of shared assumptions, concepts, values, and practices*" (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017, p.104) and can be classified as ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological (Sandelowski, 1995). In order to produce knowledge, an approach needs to be carefully considered before conducting research. Research paradigms in philosophical level can be classified into five types: (1) positivism; (2) interpretivism/constructivism; (3) pragmatism; (4) subjectivism; and (5) critical (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Polonsky & Waller, 2014; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012; Sekaran & Roger, 2013; Trochim & Donnelly, 2006). Pragmatism and criticalism are two of the main approaches in epistemology (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012; Sekaran & Roger, 2013) adopted in this study, which is explained later in this chapter.

In order to address the research questions, appropriate research philosophies and approaches must be carefully selected. The research 'Onion' (see Figure 3.1) proposed by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) sheds light on different research philosophies, approaches, strategies, time horizon, techniques, and procedures which involve in the development and progression of a research study. Three main philosophical dimensions are crucial in a research process: ontology, epistemology and axiology (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012).

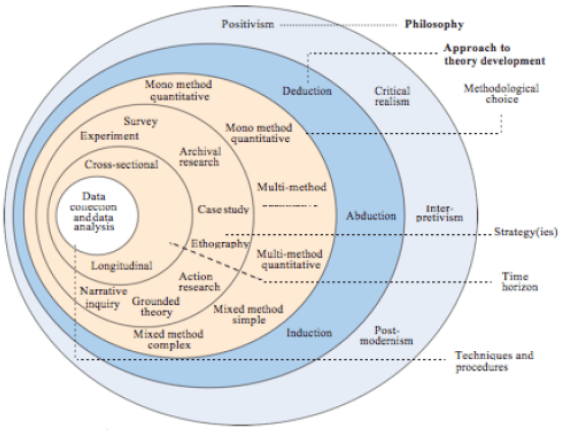

Figure 3.1: research "Onion"

Adapted from Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2012)

Major research approaches used in educational research are qualitative research, qualitative research and mixed methods research (see Figure 3.2) (Schoonenboom, 2019; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Bryman, 2016). Until 1970s, quantitative research was the predominant research paradigm in educational research. During the 1980s, advocates of qualitative and quantitative approaches each argued their approach was better than the other (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Some of these researchers even argued that the two approaches could not be used together due to the differences in the worldviews or philosophies associated with them. Yet, many researchers pointed out the advantages of data collecting using mixed research methods which combine qualitative and quantitative characteristics across the research process from philosophical foundations to the data collection, data analysis and interpretation stages (Scammon et al., 2013; Wisdom, Cavaleri, Onwuegbuzie & Green, 2012; Andrew & Halcomb, 2009).

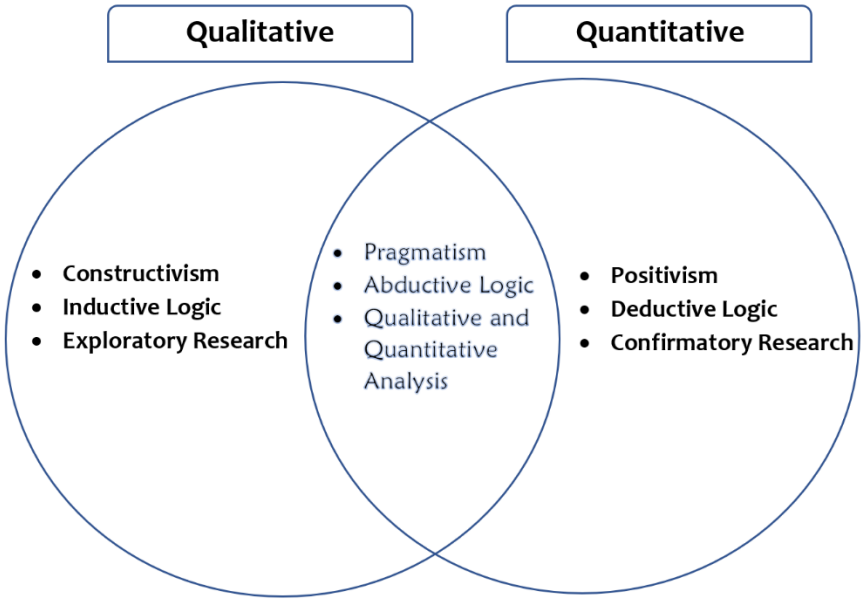

Figure 3.2: Major research approaches used in educational research
Adapted from Curry and Smith (2014)

3.2.1 Pragmatism

Pragmatism is a research approach which researchers assume reality is constantly renegotiated, debated and interpreted in the light of its usefulness in new, unpredictable, situations (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). At a philosophical level, pragmatism views the research problem as the most significant and values both subjectively and objectively so that answers can be revealed (Creswell, Klassen, Plano Clark & Smith, 2011; Feilzer, 2010; Andrew & Halcomb, 2006). In addition, pragmatism undertakes research to develop a deeper level of exploration and understanding (Halcomb & Hickman, 2015), which is ideal to apply mixed methods research to view issues in a multidimensional nature. For example, this research study which makes use of mixed methods commences with a positivist (and quantitative) worldview and then moves towards a more naturalistic (qualitative) perspective, values both objective and subject data at different stages to underpin worldviews.

3.3 Mixed Methods Research

Mixed method research allows researchers to address complex and multi-faceted issues more comprehensively instead of adopting a purely qualitative or quantitative approach (Andrew & Halcomb, 2009; Simons & Lathlean, 2010; Halcomb & Hickman, 2015). In fact, a growing number of researchers in the fields of social science, education and health have adopted mixed methods research, the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination to provide a better understanding of issues and complex phenomena than either of the approaches alone (Bowers et al., 2013; Glogowska, 2011). This research study used quantitative data collection in the initial stage to gather respondents' background information and general view to their adaptation experiences which would answer the first research question. In order to reach 200+ subjects, a questionnaire would be an effective means of collecting respondents' feelings, preferences, and opinions. The second and third research questions looked into a more individual perspective on the factors that could impact the subjects' experiences. This could not be done through a questionnaire, and therefore would have best to be collected through qualitative method such as face-to-face interviews. Considering the needs to answer the three research questions, mixed methods research would be ideal for this research study since the research questions intend to investigate different aspects such as linguistics adaptation, socio-cultural adaptation and adjustment and coping strategies (Andrew & Halcomb, 2012; Simons & Lathlean, 2010; Halcomb

& Hickman, 2015). In particular, the second and third research questions looked into subjects' adaptation issues, how they dealt with issues and specifically what approach was adopted or used.

Table 3.1: Mapping of research questions against methods

Research Questions	Method(s) Used	Type of Data Required
1. What are the reasons for Mainland Chinese students studying in Hong Kong having chosen Hong Kong as their higher education destination?	➢ Online questionnaire	➢ Quantitative ➢ Qualitative
2. What linguistic and socio-cultural experiences do they face upon in their first year study at the Chinese University of Hong Kong?	➢ Individual Interviews ➢ Group Interviews ➢ Extended Interviews	➢ Qualitative
3. How do they deal with and manage the experiences they face in Hong Kong?	➢ Individual Interviews ➢ Group Interviews ➢ Extended Interviews	➢ Qualitative

Before data collection was carried out, two key questions were considered: what method or methods would best suit a study spanning one year with a group of students to understand their transition and adaptation in a new learning environment and context; and the instrument or instruments that would be most effective in collecting data for a longitudinal ethnographic study spanning one year. Ethnography has long been applied in social sciences research studies, in particular education (Heath, 1982; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Scott Jones & Watts, 2010; Pole & Morrison, 2003; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999; Spindler, 2014; Watson-Gegeo, 1988). Ethnography is "*an approach to social research based on the first-hand experience of social action within a discrete location, in which the objective is to collect data which will convey the subjective reality of the lived experience of those who inhabit that location*" (Pole & Morrison, 2003, p. 16). Traditional ethnography focuses the study of cultural behavior in groups but most ethnography studies in fact study on individuals (Watson-Gegeo, 1988). An insider perspective is valued and extended engagement with research participants is typically needed to obtain a much more detailed,

in-depth and holistic understanding. As a doctoral student as well as an academic staff within my university a key advantage is having a clear understanding of the structural and cultural environment where the research was conducted. Valuable insights and background information on the institution as well as students have already been developed over time. My knowledge and experience at the institution would be beneficial when carrying out the research. Yet, there are also possible challenges to the positionality of an insider researcher as raised by Brannick and Coughlan (2007). In particular, the 'role duality" of an insider research who is both an insider and outsider may result in personal or professional conflicts if not handled carefully (Brannick & Coughlan, 2007). With that in mind, when carrying out the research, I often reflected on my 'dual' role and ensure neither of my positions were compromised during the research process. Thus, ethnographic research is generally longitudinal in nature, just as this study. The ethnographic approach adopted in this part of the study is different from a large-scale survey: its major objective is, by narrowing the focus, to "*convey the subjective reality of the lived experience of a particular group of individuals*" (Pole & Morrison, 2003, p. 16).

In order to understand the linguistic and socio-cultural experiences Mainland Chinese students face upon arrival and throughout their first year study at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), and how they deal with and manage these experiences, a sequential explanatory design was adopted. This mixed methods research study comprises two consecutive phases: first, quantitative data were collected and analyzed; this was followed by collection and analysis of qualitative data. The design was chosen as it would help to examine results collected from quantitative data in a more detail way from quantitative data collected and look out for 'unexpected' results, hence provide a better picture of a preliminary understanding of the data. Moreover, the use of mixed methods would increase the reliability because using a single method in a longitudinal study is likely to open doors to "*method errors*" (Behren & Smith, 1996, p. 947) whereas more than one method allows "*one to juxtapose one set of data against another, sequentially posing and discarding alternative hypothesis, and leaving a clear trail for readers to audit, and one hopes, a plausible account of evidence and reasoning about it*" (p. 947).

Using mixed methods, and collecting and analyzing quantitative data first, made it easier to eliminate factors which were not significant or directly related to the students' adaptation experiences and coping strategies. Having gone through the quantitative data, it was apparent that

quantitative analysis alone could not explain the overall picture and answer all the research questions deeply enough. Quantitative research methods allow researchers to reach a large sample size in a relatively short period of time (Rahman, 2016). Since the first research question in this study attempted to understand why Mainland Chinese students had chosen Hong Kong as a higher education destination, it would be helpful to maximize the response rate. A questionnaire could reach a large number of participants, reveal demographic information about them, and provide a basis for a preliminary understanding of their adaptation experiences and if any possible coping strategies. Initial feedback collected in the questionnaire provides a basis for better preparing questions to ask in individual and focus group interviews. Quantitative research methods provide snapshots of a phenomenon but are seldom alone enough to draw firm conclusions (Rahman, 2016). Another shortcoming of relying solely on one research method is that often respondents' experiences and what they meant may be overlooked or misunderstood (Rahman, 2016). In this way, qualitative methods complement quantitative methods and achieve a richer and more contextualized picture (Tashakkor & Teddlie, 2003). Mixed methods research followed by a sequential mixed analysis therefore seemed highly suitable and appropriate for this study (see Table 3.2).

Having considered different factors, limitations and shortcomings, a variety of data collection methods, including semi-structured individual and focus group interviews, questionnaires and observation was used to collect experiential accounts from the research participants to achieve a rich and contextualized picture of participants' adaptation experiences and coping strategies. Adopting a combination of data collection methods ensured insights into developments over time, and permitted comparison to identify correlation, cause and effect or trends over time (Colby et al., 1983) so to increase reliability and trustworthiness of the study. Mixed methods research can gather not only empirical data on participants' perception of their experiences, but with the use of secondary sources including secondary studies and the researcher's observations can build technical descriptions of the experiential contexts experienced by the participants.

The longitudinal nature of the study did have certain impact upon the research process. In particular at the initial stage of data collection, it was the start of an entire new academic year and environment for this group of Mainland Chinese students; it would be difficult to get their willingness to complete the online questionnaire. Second, with the focus group and individual

interviews to be done in English, participants might be reluctant to take part, or drop out of the interviews. Moreover, as follow-up interviews were needed to follow-up experiences of participants, uncertainties did appear as it was difficult to get in touch with them and some might be dropping out or simply unwilling to take part after the first round. During the time of data collection, Hong Kong faced various challenges, political turmoil and social events, which had affected the initial plan of data collection. Therefore, I had to let my data collection and data interpretation evolve based on the situation in Hong Kong at the time.

3.4 Institutional Setting

As stated in Chapter 1 as well as earlier section of this chapter, the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) is one of the leading universities in the region. Its uniqueness lies in the bilingual education, at which no other tertiary institutions offer in Hong Kong. CUHK has in the past years become more internationalized, with an increasing number of non-local students as well as faculty members, thus facilitating the use of English on campus. Having said that, based on my observations, Cantonese is still the dominant language used in communication and social interactions among students.

Geographically, CUHK is a bit far from the city and the campus is situated on a hillside. Over half of the undergraduates reside in the hostels of the colleges. In fact, CUHK is the only tertiary institution in Hong Kong which has a unique college system. The nine colleges are congenial. Each has its own distinctive culture, student hotels, dining halls and other facilities such as libraries, gyms, etc. These colleges aim to bring students experimental education as well as experiences of collective life with other hostel residents (CUHK, 2019). However, most hostel activities or events are organized by local students and the medium of communication is mainly Cantonese, sometimes English. Non-local students, especially Mainland Chinese students, have noticeably different linguistic backgrounds and prior sociocultural experiences. Therefore, they are often linguistically and socio-culturally excluded or marginalized in these activities and events (Yu & Zhang, 2012). Moreover, Mainland Chinese students are generally more inclined to academic accomplishment, and thus they very often focus their time and energy on their studies, sacrificing the time and opportunities to join and mix with local student group and communities (Hau & Ho, 2010). Yet, this does not mean Mainland Chinese students self-isolate themselves in the hope for academic pursuits. Rather, they understand their position in Hong Kong as international or foreign students

and are more inclined to maximize their education investment by making achievements (Li & Bray, 2007). Many are also very ambitious in their future and have a strong desire to either student abroad or stay in Hong Kong for future opportunities (Li & Bray, 2007). At such, good academic results are needed.

Although quite a number of Mainland Chinese students participate in hostel activities and events actively which I have also attended, some non-local students, especially Mainland Chinese students, are often seen as a potential threat. With the increasing number of non-local students over the years, in particular Mainland Chinese students, they take up more places in hostels which were once reserved or given priority to local students, resulting in conflicts. In 2006, some local students at the Hong Kong University (HKU) held demonstrations against the arrangement of allocation of hall places to non-local students under the UGC-funded halls. Although such kind of demonstrations was not witnessed at CUHK, personally I often hear from local students that they resent the fact that local students cannot get a place in hostels. Criticisms against the government and university for allocating more admission places as well as hostel places to Mainland Chinese students could be heard occasionally in student presentations or casual chats, and at many times in the presence of Mainland Chinese students. Despite such unpleasant incidents, the relationship between the two groups is in fact not as poor as I have imagined. It seems that conflicts or discontent flares up on political issues. However, these, although not frequent incidents, would still spark emotional effects, hence potentially affecting Mainland Chinese students' adaptation experiences.

3.5 Participants

The main participants in this study were a group of Mainland Chinese students who entered CUHK as freshmen. In Chapter 2, a brief historical and contemporary overview of Mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong was introduced. The notion of "Chinese learners" as a homogenous group of learners has long been an assumption. However, it is evident that there exist large sociocultural and linguistic gaps between Mainland Chinese students and their local counterparts. The participants selected in the study would provide a more in-depth understanding of the contradictions in this bilingual tertiary institution.

3.5.1 Selection and recruitment of participants

At the initial stage, a letter of invitation to take part in an online questionnaire was distributed to all Mainland Chinese students at the University (see Appendix 4). As all Year 1 students, including Mainland Chinese students, have to take a compulsory Foundation English Course (ELTU1001), all lecturers teaching that course were asked to help distribute the softcopy of the invitation letter to Mainland Chinese students in October 2016 and February 2017 (in the fall and spring semester respectively). The invitation letter clearly stated the rationale and the aims of the research study as well as the link to access the online questionnaire. In order to minimize and possibly avoid any feeling of being pressured to participate, the invitation letter clearly stated that the research study was voluntary and that participants were free to withdraw at any time without the need to provide a reason. In addition, the letter explained the second stage of data collection: voluntary, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. In the online questionnaire, participants could show their interest to participate in the face-to-face interviews by leaving contact information as a way to follow-up. Participants were informed that interviews would be recorded and later transcribed into text form. To further ensure anonymity, participants were informed that when presenting results, some of their own words may be used in text form. However, all text would be anonymized, so their identity would be strictly protected and remain anonymous. Moreover, all research data, including results from the online questionnaire, recorded interviews and transcription would be stored in a secure place and in a separate, password-protected file. Besides me, no one would be able to access the data. Last but not the least, participants were also reassured that their decision to participate (or not to do so), or to withdraw at a later time, would not affect their marks or grades in the course nor benefit or adversely affect them in any other way. If a participant decided to take part in the study, he or she would sign a consent form. After the initial stage of sending the online questionnaire to all Mainland Chinese students, participants had to be selected to take part in the second stage of the research – individual and group interviews. Those who had stated their willingness to be take part in further research by including their email address in the online questionnaire. My role and participation as a researcher provided me with a broad understanding of my subjects and what they face, and thus enabled me to frame the problem and guide them to provide significant details relating to the research questions. Of course, there is some risk here of my asking 'leading questions': I tried to avoid this, and my analysis of the transcripts confirmed, at least to me, that I was generally successful.

Of the 69 responses received, 51 participants included their email contact. After contacting these 51, 45 students responded to my invitation to be interviewed. Although in some respects self-selected, the 45 students came from various faculties including Business Administration, Science, Engineering, Social Science, and Art and 42 were finally selected. There is a total of eight faculties at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and a large majority of Mainland Chinese students come from the Faculties of Business Administration, Engineering, Science and Social Science. A smaller portion of Mainland Chinese students are enrolled in the Faculties of Art and Education. No Mainland Chinese students are enrolled in the Faculties of Law and Medicine mainly because the systems of law and medicine are so drastically different between Hong Kong and China.

The strategy used to select only 42 participants to take part in individual and group interviews was not meant to reach representativeness. The sample size, however, was both small enough to allow for rich in-depth data collection and cover students from diverse cultural backgrounds. My study adopted a convenience, non-probability, sampling method, in which subjects can be conveniently reached and contacted. No specific criteria, other than subjects had to be first year students from Mainland China admitted through the non-JUPAS admission scheme, were set for sample selection. The convenience sampling approach means subjects are nearby and available.

3.6 Pilot Study

A pilot study is a small-scale study which simulates the actual research study (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001; Sreejesh, Mohapatra & Anusree, 2014; Kezar, 2000; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). Green, Camilli & Elmore (2012) further point out that pilot study is undertaken to find out the validity of the questions as well as the weaknesses in design and instrumentation. Similarly, questions in a questionnaire or survey can be refined so that respondents have no difficulties understanding and answering the questions while researchers will have no problem in recording and interpreting data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). However, since the sampling of respondents were likely the same respondents being studied upon, the pilot study was not done. As the researcher, I was fully aware that not piloting the study may be a weakness, but due to time pressed, I had to decide whether to proceed with the study or conduct the pilot but wait for a year later to collect data. However, if the pilot study were conducted in 2016 and the actual data collection were to conduct a year later in 2017, a number of negative consequences would appear. First, the first year students in 2017 would be an entirely new group of Mainland students. Ethics

approval would have to be re-applied. Moreover, as teaching load is different every year and it is likely possible that I may not have a year 1 group to teach. Even though if I have a group of year 1 students, there may not be any Mainland Chinese students, given if I were assigned medical students. All the unforeseeable circumstances would make data collection a year later difficulty with many factors that could affect the process. Therefore, the decision on proceeding to data collection without conducting a pilot study was made. I was also aware as many researchers like Cooper and Schindler (2013) pointed out that most problems arise in the design of the questions in questionnaires. Thus, to avoid problems from occurring, all questions in the questionnaire and interview questions were discussed, reviewed and commented by my supervisor and secondary supervisor for several times so to ensure clarity and suitability of the questions before the distribution of the questionnaire.

3.7 Data Collection Instruments and Methods

3.7.1 Online Questionnaire

As discussed in earlier sections, this research study adopts a pragmatic paradigm, mostly inductive approach and mixed methods as the research philosophy and approach. To investigate the adaptation experiences and coping strategies of the first year Mainland Chinese students, data was collected in four stages with an extended stage which was deliberately added after the completion of the one-year long data collection using different instruments and methods which included an online questionnaire, focus group meetings, individual interviews, group interviews and extended individual interviews. A series of political turmoil and incidents took place after the initial round of individual and focus group interviews (will be discussed in Chapter 5) in hope to gain deeper understanding and reaching a richer and more contextualized picture of respondents' experiential account after an entire year of studying at CUHK and living in Hong Kong.

As discussed in Section 3.5.1, an online questionnaire (see Appendix 5) was disseminated to all first year Mainland Chinese students at the initial stage of the study to capture a larger number of responses regarding their background information such as their general background information, gender, age, secondary education information, preliminary understanding in their linguistic and socio-cultural experiences and initial coping strategies respondents used to manage their experiences. The rationale of using online questionnaire is undeniably the advantage that the Internet provides convenient and quick access to the target participants (Roberts & Allen, 2015).

While traditional or paper-based questionnaire could also serve the purpose, the major issue was that many of the participants invited to complete the questionnaire were not students of mine. Therefore, reaching them in person and inviting them to complete the questionnaire would be extremely time consuming, inefficient and difficult. Moreover, online questionnaire would provide target participants more time to study the question and think carefully before providing answers. Traditional or paper-based questionnaire, on the other hand, could be intimidating since the researcher, myself, would have to be present to administer the process; hence it may cause pressure to the target participants and they may hesitate to express themselves freely and honestly.

The online questionnaire distributed at the initial stage is essential in understanding the general view of the respondents, hence coming up with interview questions to be used in individual and group interviews. The online questionnaire served as the purpose of collecting demographic data and basic information such as respondents' intention to study in Hong Kong and CUHK, opinions and expectations and thus generated preliminary findings of their adaptation experiences. The findings collected through the online questionnaire included two open-ended questions to find out the linguistics and socio-linguistic issues or experiences they had since their arrival from Mainland China to CUHK as well as exploring whether coping strategies were applied to tackle the issues. However, many of the responses from the online questionnaire were brief or provided limited additional insight. Questions generally offered three to four choices of responses for respondents because providing limited choices would be helpful for respondents to answer questions quickly, more consistently and thus they are more willing to answer the questions and the willingness to answer honestly is higher. Answers to the online questionnaire would otherwise obtain little or no valid information if too many possibilities were offered. Moreover, in order to minimize the possibility of misunderstanding and misinterpretation caused by language errors, face-to-face interviews were arranged to allow me to clarify any vague or unclear answers collected from the online questionnaire, ask questions deeper to get a better understanding, observe and capture verbal and non-verbal ques so to ensure the validity of the answers. The aforementioned data collection approaches each serves its only purposes while the use of online questionnaire to gather a large number of responses about subjects' background information and fill the gap of what is unknown about this group of subjects. The use of interviews would allow more control by the researcher and obtain as much valuable information as needed. This way, the two different research methods could complement each other.

3.7.2 Interviews

While an online questionnaire could reach a large size of sample, face-to-face interview, on the contrary, does not require a large sample size (Wilson, Roe, & Wright, 1998; Vogl, 2013; Opdenakker, 2006). Qualitative research typically requires a smaller sample size than quantitative research but that does not underrate the quality of the data collected. Even though a small sample size may not reach representativeness, it allows researchers to spend more time for researchers and subjects to communicate and collect valuable information. Morse (2000) suggested that the sample size of 30 to 50 is ideal for ethnographical studies. As such, 42 participants taking part in face-to-face interviews (individual and focus group) helped generate a large amount of useful and valid data. Thus, common components were gathered to form the regenerated explanation.

With 42 participants selected, 6 and 36 took part in individual and focus group interviews respectively (see Appendix 6). An important consideration had to be made was the number of participants appropriate for focus group interviews. Some studies have reported as few as four and as many as fifteen participants (Fern, 1982; Mendes de Almeida, 1980; Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick & Mukherjee, 2017) were generally accepted in group interviews. Krueger and Casey (2000) suggested the ideal size would be six to eight. Drawbacks of group interviews with too many participants include the discussion would be difficult to manage and may disintegrate into two or even more small groups, each having their own independent discussion (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Therefore six participants were selected to participate in each focus group interview to ensure the discussions would be focused, in-line with the questions provided and easy to manage.

All interviews (both individual and focus group) were audio recorded and conducted in English to prevent misunderstanding and misinterpretation since I am a novice in Putonghua. While I have no problem understanding Putonghua, I am unable to deliver my thoughts and messages fluently and proficiently in Putonghua. As such, the use of Putonghua to conduct the interview would only cause possible misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Hence, with the use of English as a medium of communication in interviews, the possibility of misunderstanding could be minimized. Having said that, since English is a second or even third language for my research participants, I have to ensure mutual understanding by repeating and making clarifications continuously because every now and then participants would say they could not come up with what they want to say in English. Even though repeatedly making clarifications would take longer time than expected, this

process would make data collected more valid and substantial. Promptings, assistance and even writing words in Chinese were used as strategies in face-to-face interviews to ensure the validity and accuracy of their answers. Empirical data have been analyzed using grounded theory.

My role in the interviews is merely a facilitator or moderator. I had maintained objectivity and neutrality by merely keeping the discussion focused and providing opportunities for all voices to be heard. Even in individual interviews, never had I offered personal opinions or prompts which could possibly geared participants to feel pressured or challenged. I was extremely mindful in the questions or prompts raised in both group and individual discussions. As semi-structured face-to-face interviews, ad-hoc questions or prompts might be raised to help participants to go into more depth in their sharing. I would never include my personal feelings or beliefs in the discussion. The discussion was solely engaged by the participants. At times when elaboration was needed, I would invite the participants to explain more or provide more extensive examples to make sure sharing was concrete rather than abstract. As an English teacher and having studied Research Methodologies related courses during my Masters Degree programme, I am experienced in being a facilitator or moderator in interviews and group discussions. I drew on my background as an educator, examiner and adjudicators in various competitions in the past 17 years to provide an inviting environment for my participants. Before the interviews, individual or group, I would spend a little time chatting casually with the participants to help them feel comfortable. I would thank them for accepting the invitation to take part in the interviews and surprisingly, many of the participants shared with me that they were eager to participate because they viewed it as an opportunity to use English in a spoken exchange. During the interviews, whenever participants hesitated or reluctant to go on further, I would pause and provide waiting time to allow them some time to gather their thoughts before prompting or suggesting. If they indicated that they did not know what to say or did not know how to say, I would first encourage them to use simple English or prompt them words or phrases which may assist them. If that still did not work, I would ask them to write it out in English. The last resort was to use their native language (L1), though I tried my best to avoid this since our native language (L1) differs in Putonghua and Cantonese, and thus it could possibly cause misinterpretation at the end. After the interviews, I would thank them and go for a coffee with them. We would chat casually and those who were a bit shy and nervous during the interview seemed much more relaxed. Many of the participants told me at the coffee break that they would like to see the end-product, my thesis, when available.

3.7.3 Longitudinal Study

The longitudinal study informs the development of the survey instrument, which in turn expands the scope of the examination. This has allowed me to examine the data holistically and inclusively. Efforts made to follow-up with the selected participants further enhanced trustworthiness of the data collected as a result of friendship which was developed in the process. The development of friendship can be seen as an advantage in the research process. Just as in all other relationships, trust is the foundational building blocks. In order to establish, gain and deepen a friendship, trust is needed. Therefore, developing friendship with the research participants allow them to gain trust, hence feel safe to share themselves and the truth. It is highly possible that questions related to adaptation issues or experiences could touch on sensitive topics like discrimination, biases, unfairness, etc.; therefore, if research participants trust the researcher, more valuable and true feelings would be shared by the participants, hence increases the validity of the findings. In addition, the Chinese culture views relationship developed through friendship have influential impact such as commitments, reciprocity and trust. The variety of data collected also allows me to triangulate interpretations gathered from the participants.

To sum up the research design and timeline of my research study, I began with 69 participants with the aim to investigate general background information as well as the preliminary adaptation experiences and coping strategies. The study then narrowed to a smaller number of ten focal participants. This development in research design was supported by examples on mixed-method designs/studies illustrated by Duff (2008) that

> "*Studies could conduct a survey (e.g., involving questionnaires) and then follow up with a small number of respondents who indicate a willingness to take part in additional research and who represent important sectors or types of cases with the larger survey. The survey then also allows the research to establish the representativeness of the cases presented (p. 111).*

Norton (2000) also echoed the research design of selecting five focal participants which followed a multi-stage and multi-method strategy. Thus, the chosen methodology for this research study was still strong with precision despite the small number of sample size.

3.7.4 Timeline

Data collection was carried out from October 2016 and lasted one academic year as outlined below:

Stage	Time	Events	Data Obtained
	September 2016	Apply for Ethics Approval at CUHK and University of Nottingham	
1	October 2016	Disseminate invitation letter for participation in an online questionnaire to all first year Mainland Chinese students	• Quantitative • Qualitative (used to come up with interview questions)
	Mid-October – early November 2016	Contact participants who showed willingness to participate in follow-up interviews in the questionnaire	
2	November – early December 2016	First Round of Interview • Individual Interviews M1, F1 • Group Interviews (1, 2)	• Qualitative - transcription - coding (manual and NVivo) - themes
3	February 2017	Second Round of Interview • Individual Interviews M2, F2 • Group Interviews (3, 4)	
4	April 2017	Third Round of Interview • Individual Interviews M3, F3 • Group Interviews (5, 6)	
5	December 2017	Extended Interview • 4 Individual Interviews from faculties of Engineering, Business, Art and Science	
	January 2018 onwards	Analysis of all data and writing up for publication	

Table 3.2: Data collection timeline

3.7.5 Transcription

Interviews are the most versatile form primary research and can effectively collect detailed perceptions, opinions, and feedback. Face-to-face interviews can also gain deeper insights to the questions asked by probing for quality and valuable responses (Opdenakker, 2006; Wilson, Roe, & Wright, 1998; Phellas, Bloch, & Seale, 2011; Brustad, Skeie, Braaten, Slimani, & Lund, 2003). Data collected through face-to-face interviews were sizeable and voluminous and all in audio format. Transcription is the first stage in data analysis as it is a procedure which turns spoken discourse into text (Bloor & Wood, 2006). This stage and procedure is commonly seen as tedious and time-consuming to many researchers (Bloor & Wood, 2006) and thus outsource or delegate to transcribers to take up the task. However, I personally felt that self-transcription is a crucial stage in data analysis because the process and effort allows myself to be familiar with and immerse in the data so that a deeper understanding and get gain insights through manipulating with the data. In addition, during the process of transcription, I was able to pay more attention to non-verbal cues like fillers, long pauses, repeated phrases and words, etc. which allows me to re-examine in the context of new findings.

Identifying appropriate technique for robust data interpretation is crucial in qualitative research. Although there is no single or universal transcription technique and format adequate for all qualitative research, various systems, approaches and practical considerations have been designed and developed by researchers which aim to "*improve the reliability of transcribed data through systematic and standardized representation of how speech is delivered*" (Bloor & Wood, 2006, p.167) and "*help researchers systematically organize and analyze textual data*" (McLellan, MacQueen, & Neidig, 2003, p.63). Richards (2003) advocates the need to transcribe speech verbatim yet keeping it as simply as possible which maximizes "*reliability without sacrificing essential features*" (p.81). Hence, Richards (2003) suggested using symbols for pitch, accent, intonation, truncations, overlaps, pauses, etc. in the process of transcription which can help can retain originality and authenticity while maximizing accuracy and validity (see Appendix 7).

Scholars like Richards (2003) and Edwards (1993) both stress on similar features and principles on the need to preserve information verbatim while respecting the way how data are to manage and analyze as well retaining simplicity in transcription. Yet, the two objectives seem conflicting and contradicting. If maintaining simplicity in transcription while retaining originality, the use of

transcription symbols, in particular for researchers without adequate training and experiences, can be tedious as well as insufficient in representing the original flow of the speech. Yet, a compromise can be made between readability and faithful representation based on the researchers' decision as long as the meaning and originality is not sacrificed.

To ensure the level of delicacy in representing the nuances of the interview during transcription, the best option is definitely self-transcription yet it is extremely time consuming. Duff (2008) estimated that approximately 20 hours are needed to transcribe one hour of interview data. This estimate very much varies depending on factors like speed, proficiency of the transcriber, quality of the audio-recording, etc. Alternatives, such as coding directly from the audio-recordings or using real-time observational coding, voice recognition software, are suggested (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999; Bloor & Wood, 2006; Duff, 2008). Yet these alternatives have shortcomings like time needed to train the software to recognize voice, the inability to recognize non-verbal behaviors such as fillers, intonation, etc., which may impede reality and validity (Duff, 2008).

Therefore, as mentioned earlier in this section, self-transcription following Richard's maxim ("*describe the talk as fully but as simply as possible*") (2003, p. 182) was adopted in the first stage of data analysis. As a full-time lecturer, a total of 16 to 18 rounds of interviews with the duration of each round roughly between one to one and a half hour was transcribed throughout the year. In my case, although I did not make an accurate assessment of the time needed to transcribe one hour of interview data, it varied between four to six hours depending on the speed and clarity of the audio. Even though the transcription process took almost an entire year to complete, I thought it was extremely worth to take up the work myself instead of outsourcing or delegating to helpers as I was able to familiarize and manipulate the data while transcribing.

3.7.6 Coding

All interview data in audio-recordings were transcribed by myself before entering into NVivo, a qualitative analysis software (see Appendix 7). Richards (2003) suggests data can be engage at the very early stage of transcription. One way of doing so is to code paragraphs or larger sections line by line. This rough initial coding allows researchers to identify possible and relevant categories. At this initial stage, the aim is not to identify precise categories but to get a rough view the possible categories. Categorization at this stage is rough but serves as an initial understanding and manipulation of the data.

Duff (2008) echoes with Richards (2003) that data analysis can start at a very early stage, such as from the beginning of data collection (like when facilitating and moderating the interviews) and transcription stages, generating a brief summary of salient points and themes based on observation and interviews. This was one of the approaches I adopted at the early stage of data analysis when I identified keywords and themes after preliminary analysis.

Followed the initial coding and categorization of data, I moved forward to a more systematic to organize the categories identified previously. To do so, I had to identify a practical and suitable method in this stage. Memos, notes, highlighting, observations, re-examining the transcriptions and computer software are possible techniques, but the chosen method must be able to draw relationships and connect the data in different perspectives.

Grounded theory originated by Glaser and Strauss (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) is one of the most prominent approaches in analyzing qualitative research and the approach has made substantial contributions in qualitative research particularly drawing relationship between data collection and theory generation. Strauss and Corbin (1998) further extended the theory by pioneering three separate processes of coding to facilitate inquiry and interpretation: open (identify concepts), axial (identify relationships) and selective (choose a core concept). The core principle behind grounded theory method is "*neither inductive nor deductive but combining both in a way of abductive reasoning*" (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p.167). It is "*the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyses data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges. The process of data collection is controlled by the emerging theory*" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 45). In addition, the categories and themes appear as "*researchers develop their coding categories through a process of constant comparison*" (Alaszewski, 2006, p. 86).

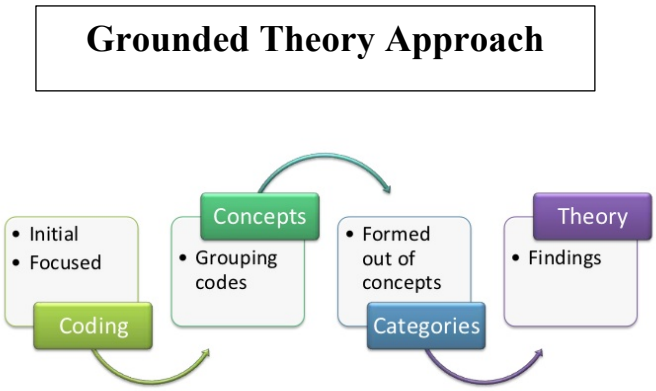

Figure 3.3: Grounded Theory Approach

Although I made certain use of ground theory techniques in my research study, the study is not based entirely on grounded theory. Closely related to grounded theory was that I jointly collected, coded and analyzed my data and decided what data to collect next and where to find them. Some pre-determined factors are drawn from the push-pull model, such as cost issues, geographic proximity, etc. However, based on my experience of teaching Mainland Chinese students and observation of situation in my hometown and institution, some pre-determined categories or factors, apart from the ones selected from the push-pull model, were in mind before my study began. With those pre-determined categories or factors in mind, I re-examined my data repeatedly in the transcription and analysis processes and looked out for unforeseen/unpredicted themes that might appear in the online questionnaire, interviews, and extended interviews. One of the unforeseen themes from interviews was the significance of Cantonese (L3 for most Mainland Chinese students) this group of students viewed as crucial in their adaptation experience in Hong Kong and CUHK. Hence, as illustrated by Duff (2008), "*even though qualitative analysis is typically inductive and data driven, the codes may also be anticipated before analyzing the data (a priori codes) given the topic of the studies, the research questions, and the issues likely to be encountered*" (p. 160). This was as a matter of fact the case with my study leading to my decision to adopt an eclectic approach to data analysis.

When analyzing data from interviews, I was not only looking for specific information but gathered answers to the research questions. Alaszeski (2006) suggests that "*if the research does not have a clear perception of specific characteristics he or she is interested in, he or she can employ the ground theory approach*" (p. 86). However, if a researcher has already pre-determined keywords,

themes or concepts, the approach involves some form of content analysis (Alaszeski, 2006; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). That means the researcher has some ideas of what he or she is looking for or expects to find and he or she examines and studies the data in order to identify relevant characteristics. As my study was highly similar to the characteristics aforementioned, I identified a priori themes of cultural shock, identity, adaptation, adjustments/transitions and language barrier based on my review of literature and my experience in teaching Mainland Chinese students. I also looked out for other repetitive themes as I examined the data.

As mentioned in the beginning of this sub-section, the use of NVivo was adopted to expedite the process of analyzing, coding and synthesizing the data. Having said that, NVivo was not the major tool used in data analysis. Manually data analysis such as examining and re-examining the data, categorizing and identifying keywords was mainly used in addition to the use of NVivo (see Appendix 8). Technology, such as computer-based software, is developed to aid researchers to organize large amount of text to minimize physical manipulation (Alaszewski, 2006). Although software like NVivo can assist and aid the process of organizing large amount of qualitative data, it requires a substantial amount of time to learn to use the software effectively. Yet the process still requires the judgement of the researcher when identifying themes (Alaszewski, 2006). Therefore, I have decided to use NVivo as a secondary tool in the process of data analysis while manual data analysis is the primary since judgement is required in analyzing the data and identifying themes. Moreover, since audio-recordings were transcribed on my own, I felt that I had already developed a great sense of familiarity and understanding to the data through the processes of transcription, repeated reading and examination, note-taking, highlighting and flagging important keywords and coding. Content analysis was also carried out through "*repeated perusal of the data*" (Gieve & Clark, 2005, p. 267), an approach they had also used in their study. As the analysis progressed, initial coding and notes were refined, building a clearer picture of the adaptation experiences and coping strategies of my students.

3.7.7 Themes

After coding and analyzing data, the next step was to consolidate the significant findings and put them in themes, which were guided by the research questions in identification of themes and patterns related to (i) the perceived linguistic and socio-cultural experiences; (ii) the coping strategies used to manage the experiences. My research carried many features and characteristics

of a case study yet because the study involved more than one participant, I had decided to proceed as a multiple-case study and focused on the 20 participants to obtain a longitudinal view of their adaptation experiences and coping strategies.

Altogether, 15 themes were identified in adaptation experiences and coping strategies (See Table 1 for themes identified). While some of the themes were pre-determined before the study, majority of the "unforeseen/unpredicted" themes were identified through examining and re-reading the data during and after transcription. With over 20,000-word of transcription, I created a table to consolidate excerpts from interview participants in order to allow "unforeseen/unpredicted" themes to surface. The themes are presented in the two chapters as illustrated in the table below.

Adaptation Experiences		Coping Strategies
Linguistic	Socio-cultural	
1. Confusion of the term "bilingualism" 2. Language barrier	1. Meeting friends/Friendship 2. Discrimination 3. Culture 4. Identity 5. Loneliness 6. Politics	1. Taking Cantonese Lessons/Learning Cantonese 2. Making friends only with students of similar background 3. Soliciting help from local friends 4. Joining local student societies or campus activities 5. Endurance and acceptance 6. Let nature takes its course 7. The Unspoken Answers

Table 3.4: Themes

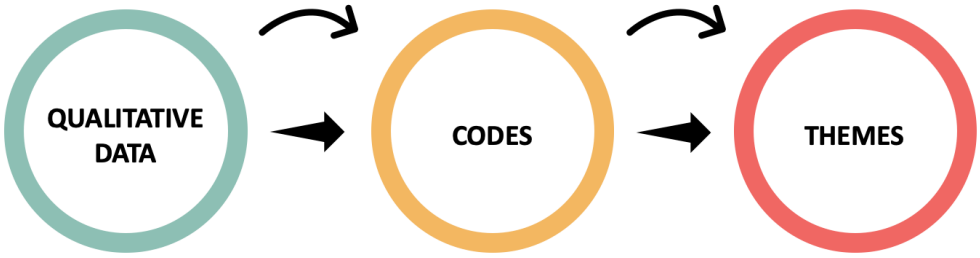

Figure 3.5: Data Analysis Process

3.8 Ethical Consideration and Approval

Formal ethical approval was applied from the Chinese University of Hong Kong in August 2016 (see Appendix 9). Ethical approval was also sought and obtained from the University of Nottingham School of Education (see Appendix 10) prior to commencing the empirical research in August 2016. All participants who took part in the study were freshman students at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and they were 18 and over. Participants took part in the study were free from coercion of any kind and were not pressured to participate in the study.

3.8.1 Complexities

The complexity of the study involved participants to be studied was that these participants were my students. It is of advantageous reaching to researchers' own students due to demographical convenience. The subjects are close-by with very regular contact and communication, hence relationship can be developed. However, complexities could also appear because these students might feel pressure since I am their teacher in a compulsory course. If explanations such as no consequences on rejecting the invitation or how sensitive data or information would be protected, these participants might worry that their performance in class or grade of the course would be affected. Therefore, it is important to address that students' participation in the study do not and will not gain any advantages or disadvantages in the course, including their grades, regular workload in the course, attendance in class, etc. To that extent, in the invitation letter distributed to all year one Mainland Chinese students, they were explicitly informed that their decision on accepting the invitation to take part in the study had nothing to do or in relationship to the course they were taking with me.

3.8.2 Ethical Responsibilities

As a researcher, my primary focus is a duty of care towards my research participants. Issues like privacy and confidentiality were the core ethical responsibilities. First, in order to protect the identity of my research participants, their names have been anonymized. English names (e.g. Alan, Anthony, etc.) were randomly assigned and only I know the real identity. This was officially stated in the confidentiality form and explained in person before the data process began (refer to Appendix 8) and received research participants' approval. A number of first-person accounts were sensitive and could give away identities if real names had been used.

In qualitative studies, ethical issues can arise when researchers interact with participants (Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi & Cheraghi, 2014). With the on-going and deteriorating political situation, I had a duty of care towards research participants and to take into account my positionality. To deal with these issues, I adopted an objective attitude throughout the data collection and data analysis stages. I did my very best to understand research participants' concerns and feelings during these incidents and was extremely mindful and sensitive in choice of wording (for instance, the term "mainlander" might bring negative feelings to the research participants, as they might feel it was discrimination). I was also very cautious and careful with providing only neutral responses when research participants shared their stories. Responses such as "I understand", "I don't blame you", etc. were avoided and replaced with neutral words or phrases and gestures like "I see", and I tried to avoid emotional facial gestures.

3.8.3 Political Situation in Hong Kong

As mentioned in Chapter 2, on-going political unrest and turmoil has in certain level affected Mainland Chinese students' emotionally. When political issues first started at participants' initial arrival in Hong Kong and CUHK, I believe most Mainland Chinese students were largely neutral or had positive reaction. However, as the situation got increasing intense and deteriorated overtime, especially when clashes between local students and Mainland Chinese students became more frequent on campus, I believe most Mainland Chinese students' emotion began shifting. Even though interviews took place in 2016-2017 when the political environment and atmosphere was not as intense as it was in 2019-2020, Mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong universities have been facing an increasing level of "anti-China" or "anti-mainland" sentiment. Any display of patriotism would result in insults or harassment by locals. Therefore, my role and position as an

interview has to remain neutral and be extra careful when designing questions and handling discussions in order not to induce or arouse any possible negative feelings or emotions. Duty of care towards research participants is my primary ethical focus and responsibility.

3.8.3.1 Positionality of My Role

As there is no statistical analysis in qualitative studies, my position as a researcher and interviewer in this research study has to remain neutral and objective throughout the data collection period and during interviews, interaction and communication with research participants the duty of care towards research participants has been exercised. Neutrality, free from bias in the research process and results, is important to enhance trustworthiness (Krefting, 1991; Sandelowski, 1986). Equally important is objectivity which means having a proper distance between my research participants and myself to minimize risk of bias. At the same time, building a friendly relationship with my research participants could reduce nervousness and shyness when discussing their views and personal accounts. Yet such friendly relations, if not handled carefully, could influence the study and results. Moreover, when asking questions to gather narrative descriptions, I paid extra and careful attention to the sensitivity of the wordings in the questions. Any sensitive words or incidents which may lead to potential negative feelings or resentments among research participants. Notwithstanding the sensitivity and caution mentioned, my role as a researcher in the research process also has some positive dimensions. As a member of the teaching staff at CUHK, I have been both an insider and outsider during the research process. As an insider, I share a common identity (members of CUHK), language and experiential base (my experience of studying abroad) with my research participants. Researchers like Adler and Adler (1997) and Unluer (2012) suggested the insider role in a research study has many advantages including allowing researchers to have a higher degree of legitimacy as well as being accepted by participants more rapidly and completely. In short, participants are able to build a relationship with the researcher and be more open in their true feelings, and thus allows a greater depth of data to be collected and gathered (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). When communicating with my research participants, I drew upon my personal experience when I studied abroad in the USA as a way to break the ice at the beginning of the interviews. Although some of the experiences encountered might have differed in certain degrees, some experiential accounts such as language barrier, being unable to make friends, discrimination, etc., were similar. As an insider, it gave me the advantages to understand their experiences more and they were more willing to share their personal accounts more precisely as

they assume there is a common understanding and share distinctiveness (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). The trust was built much earlier in the beginning stage of data collection. Moreover, my role as an insider in this thesis has offered me opportunities to enhance my understanding of the experience my research participants encountered and assisted me personally to become a more sensible and better educator.

Being an insider has a great advantage of receiving acceptance in a much earlier stage, and thus rapport is built easier and earlier. On the other hand, I am also an outsider to the participants as my role as a teacher is, in reality, quite different in identity even when we are all from the same institution. Yet, as an outsider, I was able to maintain neutrality, objectivity, and detached and emotional distance, which are values the Outsider Doctrine value in researchers (Simmel, 1950; Merton, 1972; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Kerstetter, 2012). Chawla-Duggan (2007) and Gasman and Payton-Steward (2006) both argued that being an outsider in a research may be difficult to gain access and authentic answers from research participants. Yet, being an outsider is similar to being a "stranger" which often can survey conditions with less prejudice (Simmel, 1950; Merton, 1972). My role as both an insider and outsider had allowed me to constantly remind and reflect upon myself to maintain precision, objectivity and neutrality in order to ensure validity of my data.

3.9 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has presented the overall research strategy guiding the research process. Details in research setting, stages of research, research questions, data collection methods, data interpretation approaches, and ways to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings. In the following chapters, the findings of each research question will be reported. The first research question is largely quantitative, in the aim to collect background information of first year Mainland Chinese students and their willingness to take part in the qualitative part of the research study and findings will be reported in Chapter 4. Findings from the second and third research questions which aimed at collecting narrative description in participants' adaptation experiences and coping strategies, will be reported Chapter 5 and 6.

Chapter 4
Reasons for choosing Hong Kong as a host destination

4.1 Introduction

The growing number of Mainland Chinese students going abroad to pursue higher education denotes a global phenomenon since receiving the best education is imperative in the increasingly tough and competitive labour market in Mainland China as well as other parts of the world (Mok & Jiang, 2016). In education institutions around the world, China is the main source country providing the largest share of international students (UNESCO, 2017). According to the University Grant Committee (UGC) (2017), students from Mainland China accounted for 90% of the non-local student population while most applicants applying for the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme were students from Mainland China (Liz, 2009). It is estimated that nearly 40% of students coming from Mainland China to study in Hong Kong receive either partial or full scholarship (Quality Assurance Council, 2016). The number of Mainland China pursuing higher education in Hong Kong have increased over the years and is expected to continue rising. This chapter reports and discusses on the findings in the first research question "*What are the reasons for Mainland Chinese students studying in Hong Kong having chosen Hong Kong as their higher education destination?*".

4.2 Research Design

Data was collected in a span of one year using a variety of online questionnaire, semi-structured and structured interviews, observation, and email correspondences to collect experiential accounts of cross-border students. Adopting a combination of methods in a longitudinal study can ensure the validity in developments over time, thus make comparison to identify the causes (Colby et., 1983) at the same time document information of the subjects without manipulating the setting of the study. In this study, data concerning Mainland Chinese students' background, demographic and geographic information was collected in an online questionnaire with a few open-ended questions disseminated to all year 1 Mainland Chinese students to capture their initial linguistic and socio-cultural adaptation experiences faced upon arrival and how they deal and manage the experiences faced (see Appendix 5). The findings to these initial experiences and strategies used to deal and manage the experiences would help develop individual and focus group interview questions to get a deeper understanding and narrative of the experiences and strategies used.

In addition to the online questionnaire, five semi-structured focus group interviews 10 individual interviews and two extended interviews carried out in the academic year of 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 respectively (see Appendix 11). Email correspondences were occasionally used throughout the study to clarify any unclear points or seek additional information from participants which might have been missed or vague in the interviews (see Appendix 12). The data collected contributes to seeking answers for the research questions concerning the Mainland Chinese students' adaptation experiences and coping strategies in Hong Kong.

4.3 Research Procedure

In late October and early November 2016, an invitation email (see Appendix 4) was sent to all year 1 mainland students, taking the ELTU1001 Foundation English Course, to complete an online questionnaire (Appendix 5) to understand the first research question – "*What are the reasons for mainland Chinese students studying in Hong Kong having chosen Hong Kong as their higher education destination*?" The period of late October and early November was deliberately chosen, provided these students would have adequate experiential accounts to share. The aim of the online questionnaire was to capture a large number of responses in cross-border students' general and demographic information, English learning experiences in their home country and reasons of choosing to study in Hong Kong and at CUHK. In the online questionnaire, respondents were also asked if they would like to participate in further investigation which included a focus group and individual interview. Respondents had the autonomy to accept by leaving their contact information or decline by skipping the question. The invitation to focus group and individual interviews was solely voluntary and was made clear to respondents that accepting or denying the invitation would not affect their results in the course, as some of these respondents were students in my taught courses. Over half of the respondents left their contact information.

Based on the contact information from the online questionnaire, a sample of 6 (3 male and 3 female) participants and 36 (16 male and 16 female) (see Appendix 6) first year Mainland Chinese students were randomly selected across different faculties at the Chinese University of Hong Kong to take part in individual interviews respectively. While this strategy is not meant to reach representativeness, it is justified by a number of considerations, including a sample size small enough to allow for rich in-depth data collection but enough to cover students from diverse cultural background. The sample was purposive. Through maximum variation sampling, a wide range of

perspectives relating to the selected participants could be studied. One important point to note is that gender balance was taken into account when selecting participants. Effort was also made to mix gender within group interviews as this is the best approach to achieve gender equality and fairness to avoid gender bias (Raftery & Valiulis, 2008).

The online questionnaire also served as a purpose to gain initial understanding from the two open-ended questions in order to prepare a series of questions for individual and focus group interviews in order to achieve the two other research questions, "*What linguistic and socio-cultural experiences do they face upon arrival and throughout their first year study at the Chinese University of Hong Kong?*" and "*How do they deal with and manage the experiences they face in Hong Kong?*" These questions, beginning with more general ones, would be discussed in the following discussion chapters. The questions preset for individual interviews allowed participants to provide detailed narratives and feelings while focus group interview questions were more open-ended allowing participants to interact with one another in order to achieve more in-depth understanding.

4.4 Data Analysis and Discussion

As mentioned earlier, the online questionnaire aims to capture and enrich the understanding of Mainland Chinese students' initial adaptation experiences at CUHK and achieve answers to the first research question to why they chose Hong Kong instead of their counterparts as their higher education destination. The questionnaire is divided into two parts: 1. close-ended questions aiming to capture background information of respondents including: demographic information, past English learning experiences and reasons to choosing Hong Kong and CUHK as their host destination and institution respectively; and 2. open-ended questions aiming to capture and yield more candid information and unique insight so to gain a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of linguistic and social-cultural challenges or difficulties, friendship and their worries, fears and anxiety in the coming year at CUHK.

The following sub-sections report and discuss findings on the results of quantitative questions in the questionnaire. Findings in the second part of the online questionnaire will be reported and discussed in Chapter 5.

4.4.1 Demographic Information

Around 200 first year Mainland Chinese students enrolled into CUHK in 2016-2017 were invited through email to complete the online questionnaire and a total of 67 valid responses were received; 2 responses were invalid as one respondent entered something incomprehensible and one respondent declined to complete the questionnaire. Approximately 67% (45) of the respondents showed interest to have their experiences investigated and take part in the study as they had left their contact information. In terms of gender distribution, 41.3% and 58.7% were male and female respectively (see Appendix 13.1)

More respondents came from Guangdong Provinces compared with others who came from a spread of other provinces including Sichuan, Fujian, Jiangsu, Shanxi Provinces, etc. (Appendix 13.2). This echoed with one of the pull factors suggested in the push-pull model that geographical proximity to Mainland China influenced the decision-making process from the choice of host country to host institution (Bodycott, 2009; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Simões, & Soares, 2010; Sjöholm, 1996; Yang, 2007; Li, 2007; Eder, Smith & Pitts, 2010). Guangdong Province is geographically the closest to Hong Kong with convenient travelling by private car, rapid railway or cross-border bus. Apart from the convenience of location, Guangdong Province also shares similar cultural traits with Hong Kong as Guangdong Province itself is distinctively different from other provinces in China. In fact, Guangdong Province is the only province in China with residents using Cantonese as their official dialect. Similarly to Hong Kong, the Guangdong Province is comparatively more westernized than its counterparts mainly because historically during wars and turmoil, people living in the central and northern part of China would flee to the Guangdong Province and gradually infuse and enrich the culture (China Today, 2016). In the mid-1800s after the First Opium War, the Guangdong Province became the forefront of China's interchanges with western countries, blending the east and the west culture. The similarities in the mix of east and west culture, a more globalized vision, openness, pragmatism and inclusiveness (Van Hinsbergh, 2020) are what make Hong Kong a more favorable destination for those who live in the Guangdong Province.

Respondents came mainly from the Faculty of Science (12.7%), Social Science (19%), Engineering (20.6%), Art (4.8%) and Business Administration (41.3%) (Appendix 13.3). Business Administration and Engineering have been favorable majors among Mainland Chinese

students (CUHK, 2016). Therefore, when selecting participants for interviews, more Business Administration and Engineering students were recruited according to the distribution of respondents.

4.4.2 English Learning Experiences

In order to get a general understanding of Mainland Chinese students' English learning and proficiency level, a few questions were geared to learn about their English learning experiences, how English was learnt in their home country and the kind of English learning exposure they had previously before arriving at CUHK. As a language teacher at CUHK for eight years, I have observed that one of the major obstacles in adaptation in the academic life at CUHK is the English proficiency. That does not imply in any way that their English proficiency level is not on par when compared with local students. It is just the way English taught in Hong Kong and Mainland China is drastically different. Past studies have also reported English being a language barrier as most courses are taught in English at tertiary level. This medium of instruction environment could be a linguistic adaptation issue for Mainland Chinese students.

Most respondents (92.1%) reported never taking any English proficiency examinations such as IELTS and TOEFL. About 8% of the respondents had taken IELTS and TOEFL. Based on the results provided by respondents, a trend was revealed. For those 8 respondents who had taken the IELTS, all of them had done better in the components of Reading and Listening than Writing and Speaking. This somewhat matched with my observation as well as in the open-ended questions in the online questionnaire that many respondents reported having issues with writing and speaking in their language barrier such as:

> "*I have no problem listening and reading but when it comes to speaking English and writing essay, I do very bad.*"
>
> "*We did a lot of reading in China, but no speaking and no group discussion at all*".

In my experience of teaching Year 1 Mainland Chinese students, this group of students mainly struggled in writing essays. During individual consultations in my courses, Mainland Chinese students often reported that they were only asked to write very simple English composition in secondary school in China and they are not used to writing long essays, especially creative writing. This could be the difference between the English curriculum between the two places.

In addition, I intentionally created two questions in the online questionnaire to find out whether respondents enjoyed learning English at school in Mainland China and whether they had taken any English courses or private lessons outside of school to find out whether these students had some rejection towards English in the first place. Respondents were asked to rate the level of enjoyment on a scale of 1 to 6 with 1 being least enjoyed and 6 being most enjoyed. Most of the respondents reported to have enjoyed the learning with results leaning towards the enjoyed side - 4 (42.9%), 5 (25.4%) and 6 (14.3%). Only a small number of respondents did not enjoy the English learning in their home country – 2 (5.3%) and 3 (11.1%) (Appendix 14.1). Results showed that most of the respondents were quite neutral in the learning English experience in their secondary school life. The results were not totally unexpected because only about one-third of the respondents (33.3%) had taken English language courses or private lessons outside of school. Respondents explained later in individual interviews that since they thought the English learning at their secondary schools was inadequate, they voluntarily took English language courses or private lessons. A majority of respondents reported the decision was not based on their own willingness to achieve better English proficiency but a decision influenced by their parents because they had friends or relatives who had studied abroad. When reviewing the literature on parental influence and parenting style on academic achievement, it has been found that parental influence is more common among Asian parents (Charest-Belzile, Drapeau & Ivers, 2020; Chua, 2011; Dewar, 2012; Ng, Pomeratz & Deng, 2014). Chinese parents, in particular in Mainland China, are known to exert more control over children. A large-scale multi-national study found that Mainland Chinese children reported their parents were more intrusive and controlling (Barber, Stolz, Olsen, Collins & Burchinal, 2005). They often perceive their children's needs and future by incorporating their own judgment and thinking. At the same time, as the traditional Chinese culture and belief of respect, Chinese children are taught at young age to listen and follow their parents' words because their parents would only seek to minimize failure and maximize success in different areas with academic being one of those areas (Chao & Sue, 1996; Grolnick, Price, Beiswenger, & Sauck, 2007; Ng, Pomerantz & Deng, 2014). This would explain why not many Mainland Chinese students had taken the initiation to take English language courses or private lessons outside of school and not many of them actually enjoyed learning English.

Two other questions were asked in this section to find out whether respondents had attended any English courses or study tours in non-English speaking countries outside of Mainland China and

English speaking countries (i.e. the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia, etc.). The findings were quite similar with 85.7% and 79.4% respectively responding that they had not. Meanwhile 14.3% and 20.6% of respondents did not attend or participate in any English language courses/study tours in English and non-English speaking countries (see Appendix 14.2 and 14.3). This concluded that a vast majority of the respondents had no exposure in overseas study tours or courses and this would also explain why Mainland Chinese students often reported speaking is one of the major linguistic barriers.

4.5 Reasons for choosing Hong Kong and CUHK

4.5.1 CUHK Offers Bilingual Education

Finally, when asked whether Hong Kong was respondents' top choice for tertiary education, a large portion of the respondents answered 4, 5 and 6 (34.9%, 22.2% and 14.3%) on a scale of 1 to 6 with 1 being totally disagree while 6 being totally agree (see Appendix 15.1). In the follow-up question asking respondents the reason(s) to why they chose CUHK as their host destination (see Appendix 15.2), most respondents, 68.3% chose "CUHK offers bilingual education". In fact, multiple studies revealed that factors contributing to the high student mobility in higher education sector include the unique mixture of Western and Chinese education system (Li, 2007), diverse linguistic, demographic and sociocultural environment (Cheng, Cheung & Ng, 2015; Lo, 2013), the high international rankings and international reputation and international network Hong Kong universities have (Cheng, Cheung & Ng, 2015; Lo, 2013) as well as the "one country, two systems" constitutional framework. CUHK, one of the most prestigious higher education institutions in Hong Kong, is alone in adopting a bilingual medium of instruction of Chinese and English. The term 'bilingual' has attracted Mainland Chinese students because being able to use Chinese and English at CUHK would make their adaptation experiences much easier. In addition, "bilingual" implies that students could make use of Chinese to help them understand concepts and reading materials better. To further understand if "bilingual education" had made their adaptation easier, a question was set to be asked in both focus group and individual interviews "if bilingual education and the term 'bilingual' was what they thought it was". The findings will be reported and discussed in Chapter 5.

4.5.2 Stepping Stone to Further Study Abroad

Another top reason respondents chose Hong Kong as their tertiary destination was a "hope to go to other countries after graduating from CUHK" (50.8%). Many mainland Chinese students regard Hong Kong as a stepping stone to further their study in other parts of the world, in particular the United Kingdom, the United States, and some parts of Europe (Li & Bray, 2007). The United Kingdom and the United States, regarded as offering excellent and high-quality learning opportunities, were the main traditional destinations for mainland Chinese students. However, stricter rules and greater difficulty in applying to overseas universities, getting visas and securing places have affected the interest in applying to these traditional destinations. Hence, many mainland students turn to Hong Kong for the reason that even as a part of China, Hong Kong has differences in laws, currencies, educational systems and culture which becomes key attractiveness for student mobility (Li, 2015; Jiani, 2017). What is more, universities in Hong Kong, in particular the University of Hong Kong (HKU), The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) combine western and Chinese elements and features in their educational system which can be seen as hybrid systems by many mainland Chinese students (Li, 2015). As a result, Hong Kong plays a dual role as destination and a stepping-stone in terms of international mobility for Mainland Chinese students (Li, 2015). Studying overseas requires not only visas but language competence. Many Mainland Chinese students who cannot fulfill overseas language proficiency requirements find Hong Kong an attractive territory to obtain tertiary education, hoping to improve their language proficiency at the same time.

In addition, the lack of an English proficiency prerequisite among mainland Chinese students has increased the attractiveness to study in Hong Kong. Li (2015) revealed in her study that many Mainland Chinese students chose Hong Kong as an ideal tertiary destination also viewed Hong Kong as a "transit station" to prepare themselves for going abroad to further their study. They believed after studying and living in Hong Kong for four years, they would have a competitive advantage over those who remained on the mainland because they would be more international. This implies that, to a certain extent, Hong Kong still acts as a center stage for mainland students' international mobility (Li, 2015).

4.5.3 Financial Consideration (Tuition Fee and Scholarship)

Another reason topped the list to why Mainland Chinese students chose Hong Kong as a destination and CUHK as a host institution was finance, including respondents receiving scholarships from CUHK (28.6%) and tuition fees in Hong Kong being cheaper than overseas countries like the UK, the USA, Canada, etc. (11.1%)

Financial consideration is one of the factors which impacts international student destination choice reported by various researchers and empirical studies that used the push-pull model of international study mobility (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Wilkins, Balakrishnan & Huisman, 2012; McMahon, 1992; Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Shanka, Quintal & Taylor, 2005; Gatfield & Chen, 2006; Li & Bray, 2007; Abubakar, Shanka & Muuka, 2010; Padlee, Kamaruddin & Baharun, 2010). Studying abroad is an investment and could be costly. While it has become more affordable to some mainland Chinese families, many families still struggle to bear such cost in sending their children abroad. The financial cost involved in studying abroad includes the cost of living, tuition fee, travel cost and living expenses. Financial reasons heavily influenced Mainland Chinese students' decisions when deciding to study in Hong Kong and at CUHK. In Hong Kong, non-local students have to pay a higher tuition fee than local students. Tuition fee for non-local students in the academic year of 2017/18 ranged from HK$90,000 to HK$265,000 excluding expenses such as accommodation, living expenses, and study-related expenses (Education Bureau, 2017) but this is still relatively cheaper than studying abroad in other English speaking countries; it also avoids the hassle to go through complicated and strict immigration and visa process, yet high quality and world-recognized education is guaranteed. The relatively low tuition fee compared with overseas countries like the USA, the UK, Canada, etc. made Hong Kong and CUHK an attractive destination.

The availability of scholarships is another important financial factor influencing Mainland Chinese students' decision when choosing their host country and host institution. However, I believe not receiving a scholarship would not discourage them in Mainland Chinese students' intention to study abroad as the cost of studying in Hong Kong and CUHK is still relatively cheaper than studying in overseas countries. Hence, studying in Hong Kong and CUHK would not create extra financial burden to their parents or families, yet more cost-effective.

Lee (2014) studied on the factors which influenced overseas students to choose Taiwan as a study destination. Despite differences in culture, income level, background, cost was the most important

factor influencing their choices of selecting country and university of their choice. This, in short, implied that finance is generally one of the most, if not the most, important factor in the decision-making process and is consistent with researchers' findings (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Wilkins, Balakrishnan & Huisman, 2012; McMahon, 1992; Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Shanka, Quintal & Taylor, 2005; Gatfield & Chen, 2006; Li & Bray, 2007; Abubakar, Shanka & Muuka, 2010; Padlee, Kamaruddin & Baharun, 2010). In addition, Lee (2017) since finance is an important factor of choosing Hong Kong and CUHK as a host destination, scholarships are of great importance to Mainland Chinese students. Studying abroad is much more costly than studying in their home country (Eder, Smith & Pitts, 2010), and the availability of scholarships increases the incentives to choose CUHK. In the questionnaire, a number of respondents revealed that one of the top reasons of choosing CUHK as the host institution is the availability of different scholarships at CUHK. To attract outstanding and meritorious non-local students (i.e. students from Mainland China), the Hong Kong Government established the HKSAR Government Scholarship fund in 2008 as a way to recognize distinguished non-local students to pursue higher education in Hong Kong (Education Bureau, 2019). Besides, CUHK offers Admission Scholarship for outstanding non-local students who have attained outstanding Gaokao (National College Entrance Examination in China) results (CUHK, 2016). Li (2007) conducted a study to investigate the reasons why Mainland Chinese students chose Hong Kong as a destination and the top reason affirmed was the availability of scholarships. In 2000, the University Grants Committee (UGC) launched a scholarship specially for 50 outstanding mainland students to come to Hong Kong to pursue undergraduate studies in the UGC-funded institutions which include CUHK (UGC, 2000). The scholarship covered tuition fees, academic expenses and living costs during their undergraduate studies in addition to a year of pre-university training programme (UGC, 2000).

4.5.4 Location (Close Proximity)

Close proximity is another top answer in which respondents chose CUHK as their tertiary education destination with 19% of respondents choosing the option "CUHK is located in Hong Kong which is close to my hometown". One of the pull factors which influences the decision of international student mobility is geographic proximity (Mazzarol, 2002; Shanka, Quintal, & Taylor, 2005; Abubakar, Shanka & Muuka, 2010; Padlee, Kamaruddin & Baharun, 2010; Bhati & Anderson, 2012; Maringe, 2006; Pimpa, 2003). Mainland Chinese students are particularly drawn to study in Hong Kong because of the close proximity to home (Mainland China). Hong Kong

has over the last decade positioned itself as 'Asia's World City' which has close ties with Mainland China but is, at the same time distinctly different from Mainland China (Kerelian & Jordan, 2018; Derudder et al., 2018; ICEF Monitor, 2016). Hong Kong is also the entry point to the westernized culture plus well developed global financial and corporate markets just across the border from Mainland China (ICEF Monitor, 2016). Its convenience in terms of proximity to home is what attracts many mainland Chinese students to choose Hong Kong as a host. Very often I would hear Mainland Chinese students, during casual conversation and ice-breaking activities in class, would share responses like "*Hong Kong is very close to Guangdong Province and I can just take the cross border bus to go home*", "*Studying in Hong Kong is very convenient for me. I can go home even during short breaks or weekends*", "*Hong Kong is close to Shanghai and the flight time is less than 2 hours which is better than in overseas countries*", "*Getting home from Hong Kong is fast and convenient and cheap as well. I can take a plane easily from Shenzhen Airport*", "*CUHK is quite close to Shenzhen and it takes only less than half an hour to get to the Gaotie Station in Lo Wu and I can be home within 3 hours"*. With its convenient geographical location, Hong Kong and CUHK become an attractive host location and institution drawing many mainland Chinese students to study here. Hong Kong is still seen as comparable to overseas countries while less distant from their homes.

Again, the push-pull model echoed with the reasons to factors (i.e. geographical proximity to mainland China, availability of scholarships, etc.) contributing to student sojourners' decision when choosing their host country and institution as discussed in Chapter 2.3. A significant point worth looking into is the reason "CUHK offers bilingual education" which was later found being a contradictory point. It will be discussed later in this chapter.

4.5.5 Recognizing Hong Kong as a "between and betwixt place" and Parental Influence

Other reasons of which respondents chose CUHK as their tertiary education destination included "I had no other offers other than CUHK" and "My parents made the decision for me". In order to capture a more detailed explanation from the two respondents, an email was sent out to ask if they were willing to explain more on their "reason". While the two reasons were not totally unexpected or surprising, it was worth understanding deeper.

In the email requesting for further and more detailed explanation, one student replied and explained that he intended to study outside of Mainland China. Even though he received an offer from a local university in mainland China, he intended to study abroad. In fact, he had applied to institutions in Hong Kong, the USA, Australia and Germany but he only received an offer from CUHK without the support of scholarship. After thinking over, he made the decision to study in Hong Kong because he wanted to study anywhere but Mainland China. He wanted to explore the world and shift away from "comfort zone." I wrote back and asked what he meant by "comfort zone", he further explained "comfort zone" is a place where he has been living in since he was born. He felt that it was time to go elsewhere, somewhere away from his hometown. This reason or factor, in fact, was a relatively different reason in choosing host institution and destination was not discussed in literature.

As for the other factor "parental influence", this pull factor was in fact identified by previous researchers (Bodycott, 2009; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Pena, 2000; Chao & Sue, 1996; Li, 2007; Kandel & Lesser, 1969; Hegna, & Smette, 2017). According to Mazzarol (2002), parental influence is an important pull factor which has great impact and effect on students' choice of host destination. Many Chinese parents believe that their children's future depends on greatly on good education (Jiang & Ashley, 2000). Parents perceive that a foreign degree (any university degree obtained outside of universities in Mainland China) guarantee better prospects upon returning home (Gareth, 2005). Therefore, parental influence plays a crucial role on the selection of host destination and institution.

4.6 Conclusion of the chapter

The underlying pull factors mentioned in this chapter are interrelated. Bilingual education is important because it provides students with both academic and social environments and frames opportunities for future studying abroad opportunities. Financial considerations eliminate possible barriers faced by students when studying abroad. Geographical location frames the physical living environment when studying abroad. Finally, parental influence is important as parents can directly and indirectly impact different aspects in the selection process.

It could be concluded that studying in Hong Kong would provide similar international experience to Mainland Chinese students while they would not put financial burden to their families. Although there was no mention in the open-ended questions in online questionnaires, many

education agencies in Mainland China offer services including reviewing and training for admission, language and proficiency tests, guiding them to choose schools and programs which best fit their profile, improving their application essays/personal statements, etc. These services come at a high price. China's largest education agency, New Oriental Education and Technology Group, which offers overseas study consulting service charges at an average about 30,000 yuan (approximately 4,500USD) (America CGTN, 2017). In 2016, the company earned more than 1 billion yuan (approximately 150 million USD) (America CGTN, 2017). For wealthy families who can afford these expensive services, they would seek services from these agencies and choose universities in the UK or USA as their ideal destinations. Yet, some families from the rural areas who cannot afford these services are likely to find Hong Kong as an ideal destination since they need not pay large sum of money to get consulting services. What is more, since Hong Kong has been putting massive effort into boosting internationalization by diversifying its student body and recruiting more non-local students to study at universities, this has further attracted more mainland Chinese students.

With a considerable amount of mainland Chinese students choosing Hong Kong as a host city and CUHK as a host institution, it was worthwhile to understand the reasons to why this group of students chose Hong Kong as their higher education destination instead of their counterparts. The primary aim of this research question was to understand the factors that influence the decision-making process from the choice of host country to host institution through applying the push-pull model (Lee, 1966; Lee, 2014). Research has shown that international student mobility is influenced by push-pull factors (Bodycott, 2009). Pull factors are what make a host destination attractive to students. Drawing on previous research, five common pull factors were found to have impact on mainland Chinese students' choice of study destination: (1) tuition fees, living expenses, travel cost and social cost; (2) geographical proximity to mainland China; (3) availability of scholarships; (4) recommendations and the influence of parents (Bodycott, 2009; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Pena, 2000; Chao & Sue, 1996; Li, 2007; Kandel & Lesser, 1969; Hegna, & Smette, 2017); and (5) medium of instruction (Lueg & Lueg, 2015) and much of the findings in the online questionnaire echoed with these pull factors.

Chapter 5
Initial Linguistic and Socio-Cultural Adaptation Experiences

5.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on the findings captured from the six open-ended questions in the second part of the online questionnaire which answer part of the second research questions – "*What linguistic and socio-cultural experiences do they face in their first year study at the Chinese University of Hong Kong?*" and how findings were used to design interview questions. As mentioned in Chapter 4.4, the online questionnaire was divided into two parts: (1) close-ended questions aiming to capture background information of respondents including: demographic information, past English learning experiences and reasons to choosing Hong Kong and CUHK as their host destination and institution respectively; and (2) two open-ended questions aiming to capture and yield more candid information and unique insight so to gain a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of linguistic and social-cultural challenges or difficulties, friendship and their worries, fears and anxiety in the coming year at CUHK. This chapter then continues to report and discuss on the findings captured from individual and group interviews with questions derived from the initial findings of in the open-ended questions in the second part of the questionnaire

5.2 Findings and Discussion

The online questionnaire was disseminated to all Year 1 Mainland Chinese students in the first and second term, October 2016, and February 2017, respectively. Respondents who completed the questionnaire in the second term might be able to provide more feedback because their duration of study at CUHK was five to six months longer than the first batch of respondents. The open-ended questions collected initial experiences provided by respondents through asking various open-ended questions. Data collected had allowed me to come up with interview questions which were used later in individual and focus group interviews.

5.3 Linguistic Challenges

The first open-ended question asked responded to share any language (English, Cantonese and/or Putonghua) challenges or difficulties they had. The findings are reported in two separate sub-sections.

5.3.1 English

Common linguistic challenges reported by respondents was they had difficult in English, in particular writing, speaking and listening:

> "*I find many problems with my English in writing, speaking and listening"*.
>
> "*My reading is okay but my listening is terrible. I can't understand what the professors say in lectures*."
>
> "*My tutor told me she can't understand my writing. I re-read what I wrote and I agreed. It doesn't make sense."*

Over the years as a lecturer at CUHK, I have come across similar situations that Mainland Chinese students struggled in the use of English as a medium of instruction. As most of the major courses are taught in English, their biggest challenge is likely to be they could not understand what teachers are saying in lectures or tutorials. Very few respondents mentioned that the reading materials in English were difficult as a lot of technical terms, academic vocabulary and general vocabulary could not be understood. Some respondents also said they were still not used to lectures being taught in English and after half a year, they were still struggling. One respondent added that because her accent and pronunciation was different when compared with local students, she often had difficulty getting her points across especially during group discussions. While majority of the respondents did not seem to be able to adjust or adapt to the medium of instruction issue, a few respondents actually said they had got used to it.

Combining findings from the close-ended and open-ended questions regarding English being an adaptation issue or challenge, a few questions to get a better understand of how English was learnt and how differently English was taught and learnt between the two places were posed: (1) Many respondents answered that the subject English was taught each week in high/secondary schools in mainland China for more than 6 hours per week. Can you tell me the timetabling in your secondary school?; (2) What is included in the English curriculum/syllabus?; and (3) How is English taught in your secondary school?" The answers would allow me to understand and explore the gap in English curriculum/syllabus between the two places, thus come up with suggestions to higher education institutions in Hong Kong to how to bridge the gap and allow this group of students' to adapt to the linguistic environment easier.

5.3.2 Cantonese

Besides English, a majority of the respondents also reported Cantonese being a linguistic challenge they faced since their arrival at CUHK. Many of the respondents shared that because Cantonese is a dialect used on campus to communicate among local students, they found it extremely difficult to communicate with these local students in and outside classes. Some felt isolated because their peers would use Cantonese to communicate and they could not understand, thus join in, "*I think they isolate me because I speak Putonghua. If I spoke in Cantonese, I think we would get along fine"*. One respondent further shared that because she felt isolated in activities arranged by her college, she lost interest in joining college activities. If she knew local students were organizing the activities, she would not join. Some also felt that Cantonese expanded the gap between local and mainland students that had already existed. Although there seemed to be a lot of negative feelings towards the Cantonese environment among these mainland students, a few took active approach to adapt to the environment by taking Cantonese classes, thus made their adaptation easier. This challenge was well worth to be investigated further as much review literature focused on English being the major linguistic challenge, but not many discussed on the official language in the host country being adaption issue. In fact, one interesting point when pondering on questions for the interviews was that the official language in Hong Kong is "Chinese" but the dialect is "Cantonese". This point is often neglected because people would refer the language of a host country instead of a dialect. Therefore, when the term "Chinese" is mentioned, most people would have thought the "Chinese" used in China and Hong Kong was the same; however, that is not the case.

5.4 Social Challenges: Making Friends

Two questions asked respondents whether they had made any friends with local students since their arrival at CUHK and if they found any difficulties getting along with friends/classmates whom they have met at CUHK, 93.7% of the respondents had made friends but only 63.5% did not find any difficulties getting along with the friends they met (Appendix 18.1). Only 6.3% of the respondents have not made any friends with local students (Appendix 18.2). It was found that the two most common reported difficulties to making friends were related to language and cultural differences. In the aspect of language, respondents commonly reported, "language difficulty", "can't understand Cantonese", and "poor English especially inaccurate pronunciation". As for the

aspect of cultural differences, the most commonly reported difficulties were, "cultural differences", "prejudice", "differences in political views" and "no common topics to talk about". While these linguistic and socio-cultural challenges were somewhat expected because they have been repeatedly reported in reviewed literature as discussed in Chapter 2 Literature Review. It was worthy to investigate more to get a deeper understanding of respondents' experiences. Therefore, individual and focus group interviews were arranged to achieve this. Individual interviews were arranged to capture linguistic challenges or difficulties faced by participants while focus group interviews were arranged to capture socio-cultural challenges and difficulties.

5.5 Interview Questions

Drawing on the responses from the open-ended questions on respondents' initial linguistic and socio-cultural adaptation experiences, a list of questions was designed to further capture interview participants' responses. Two different sets of questions were designed for individual and group interviews. As interviews were semi-structured, I, as the interviewer, could ask and prompt participants to clarify, elaborate or ask additional questions whenever necessary.

Questions related to linguistic adaptation experiences were designed purposively for individual interviews as their experiences are usually more general with less conflicting arguments or very diverse views. The list of questions used in semi-structured individual interviews was:

1. Many respondents answered that the subject English was taught each week in high/secondary schools in mainland China for more than 6 hours per week. Can you tell me the timetabling in your secondary school? What is included in the English curriculum/syllabus? How is English taught in your secondary school?
2. Was Hong Kong your top choice of university education? Why or why not?
3. Most respondents answered that they chose to study at CUHK because of the bilingual education CUHK offers. What did "bilingual" mean at the time when you chose CUHK? Now, is there any difference in terms of "bilingual" in your understanding?
4. So after one semester of studying at CUHK,
    4.1 do you feel that your English has improved?
    4.2 have you met more local friends?
    4.3 have your initial views of CUHK changed?

4.4 have you faced any difficulties which you didn't anticipate at your arrival in September 2016?

4.5 besides English, what other language barriers have you faced? Were you able to find ways to tackle the barriers?

Semi-structured group interviews served the purposes to discover and undercover personal attitudes and beliefs through the interaction among interviewers. The diversified and enriched information is likely to be achieved through participants exchanging viewpoints and discuss agreements and disagreements. This is unlikely possible in individual interviews; therefore, a list of more open-ended questions was used in group interviews.

1. Some mentioned that people in Hong Kong are prejudice towards those who come from mainland China. Do you believe this is true? What do you think based on your experience at CUHK and having stayed in Hong Kong for a bit more than half a year?
2. Some mentioned that some local students spoke ill of mainland during social activities. Have you faced something similar? What do you think about this comment?
3. Some mentioned local people holding grudges against mainlanders perhaps of their political opinions or stereotypes of the image of mainlanders. What do you think about this comment? Do you think it's true?

5.6 Data Analysis and Discussion

This section reports and discussion findings in the second research question, "*What linguistic and socio-cultural experiences do they face upon arrival and throughout their first year study at the Chinese University of Hong Kong?"* All recorded interviews were transcribed manually and coded manually during the transcription process. Transcribed data was then entered into NVivo. The double coding process would ensure important keywords or points were not missed during the manual coding process. After coding and analysis, two main themes and eight sub-themes were derived from the findings from all sources of data which including focus group interviews, individual interviews and extended individual interviews. The findings are first separately discussed in the three and six major themes of Linguistic and Socio-cultural experiences respectively with sub-themes identified in each major theme.

5.7 Linguistic Experiences

5.7.1 Theme 1: Confusion of the term "Bilingualism"

Because Hong Kong was once a British colony, a complex linguistic position is the result of such unique historic background. While Cantonese is the dominant language used in Hong Kong, English also plays an important role in most education, social, cultural, and political activities. Even though Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997, English still plays an important role in economics, businesses, academics and politics. In any event, English is still an official language in most professional and government affairs. As mentioned in Chapter 4, being one of most prestigious and renowned higher education institutions in Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) adopts a bilingual approach in the medium of instruction: Chinese and English. In fact, CUHK is the only higher education institution in Hong Kong that adopts the bilingual medium of instruction. This is also what attracts many mainland Chinese students choose CUHK as their higher education destination. It was found in the questionnaire that over 75% of the respondents agreed that CUHK was their top choice and 68% of the respondents chose CUHK as their top choice because CUHK offers bilingual education. In both focus groups and individual interviews, respondents mentioned the term "bilingual" really attracted them because they thought it would be easier to adapt to the environment at CUHK when they could use Chinese. In addition, quite a number of respondents also mentioned "bilingual" to them meant Chinese and English, but they had no idea, until their arrival, that 'Chinese' does not mean Putonghua. In reality, the term "Chinese" in bilingual education meant Cantonese.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Hong Kong has a complex and unique linguistic environment. Hong Kong used to be a part of Guangdong province but after being a British colony, Hong Kong became a separate entity. However, Hong Kong did not rejoin Guangdong province after the return of sovereignty in 1997. Instead, Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region under the "One Country Two Systems" principle developed by the late paramount leader of the People Republic of China (PRC) in the 80s (Scott, 2017). In view of this, the Hong Kong Government and its Education Bureau (EDB) strive to maintain a good standard of the use of English and Chinese to increase students' competitiveness and foster strong exchange and ties with Mainland China. In 1997, the Education Bureau (1997) produced a new set of language policy which aimed to develop students to be biliterate (master in written Chinese and English) and trilingual (fluent in spoken

Cantonese, English and Putonghua). In addition, the term "Chinese" is often confused by foreigners because the official and national language in China is Chinese, but it refers to Putonghua whereas "Chinese" in Hong Kong refers to Cantonese.

China has 23 provinces and Cantonese is the only lingua franca in the province of Guangdong. It is also an official language of Macau, a Special Administrative Region of China with a similar background like Hong Kong except it was a Portuguese Colony being returned sovereignty to China in 1999. This means that the majority of people in China do not speak Cantonese. Even in Guangdong province, Cantonese is only a lingua franca and Putonghua is still an official language used by officials and most professional institutions. This can explain why students from other parts of China do not speak or understand Cantonese. Only having realized when they arrived at CUHK that bilingual education does not refer to Putonghua and English, but Cantonese and English.

5.7.2 Theme 2: Language Barrier

Language barrier was the most significant issue brought up from surveyed and interviewed respondents. From the findings, language barrier can be further separated in Cantonese and English. Possibly a result from the confusion or misconception in the term "Bilingual" means Putonghua and English, respondents often found barrier and challenges in the use of Cantonese in their experiences at CUHK. Even when English and Putonghua were used as a lingua franca in communication between local and Mainland Chinese students, conflicts and issues were emanated from the lack of Cantonese knowledge.

5.7.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Cantonese

The lack of Cantonese proficiency was the major linguistic challenge brought up by surveyed and interviewed respondents. As Cantonese is the predominant dialect used on campus to communicate most commonly among local students, majority of respondents found it extremely difficult to communicate with local students in and outside classes. Some felt isolated because their peers would use Cantonese to communicate and socialize yet they could not understand, thus join in. One respondent further pointed out that because she felt isolated in activities arranged by her college, she lost interest in joining college activities. If she knew local students were organizing the activities, she would not join. Some respondents also felt that Cantonese expanded the gap between local and mainland students that had already existed. Although there seemed to be a lot

of negative feelings towards the Cantonese environment among these mainland students from non-Cantonese speaking regions, a few took active approach to adapt to the environment by taking Cantonese classes, thus made their adaptation easier.

Arriving at CUHK, mainland Chinese students had to adapt to a brand new and different sociolinguistic environment. The lack of Cantonese knowledge had impeded communication, integration and adaptation. Some even felt isolated because their peers would use Cantonese to communicate with one another. Because they had trouble understanding Cantonese, respondents shared that they refrained themselves from joining in the discussion or conversation. Integration to the local student environment was thus hindered. One respondent shared in the focus group interview:

> *Jessica: "I was grouped with 3 local students. When the professor asked us to discuss and analyze a case, they used Cantonese instead of English. When I asked if they could use English or Putonghua, they said their Putonghua was not good. They prefer using Cantonese. They then tried to switch back and forth Cantonese and Putonghua, but it was even more complicated. I felt extremely isolated during the group discussion. I wish I could understand and speak Cantonese."*

Apart from Jessica, at least six other respondents had shown similar feelings about the lack of Cantonese proficiency. Common responses included "*I cannot understand Cantonese*", "*Cantonese is actually very difficult for me and it is used throughout the campus*", "*I feel isolated because I don't know Cantonese*". These experiences reported by interviewees are in fact in line with a study conducted by Cheung (2013). In his study, many Mainland Chinese students reported language being the biggest issue in their study in Hong Kong, in particular those who do not speak Cantonese. Although various studies found that the biggest challenge foreign students face in English speaking countries like the UK, the US, or Australia is language proficiency – English (Lin & Scherz, 2014; Hughes, 2008; Yu & Zhang, 2016), the major difference is that mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong are dealing with two different languages at the same time whereas Mainland Chinese students only have to focus and tackle the challenge in English since English is the medium of instruction in teaching and the language used in day-to-day communication and interaction. Dealing with one language is challenging enough, not to mention two. This is indeed reported by an interviewer in a group interview.

Bonnie: It takes time to master two languages. So, unable to speak Cantonese brings tremendous inconveniences and frustration.

Even when most students in Hong Kong can speak Putonghua, Cantonese remains as the predominant dialect used in the city. In the past two years, conflicts and political turmoil appearing between Hong Kong and China have frustrated many local people, especially the younger generation. After the handover of sovereignty in 1997, Hong Kong has gradually integrated more to mainland China. Many people in Hong Kong, therefore, begin having fear of "mainlandization", the gradual assimilation of Hong Kong into mainland China. In fact, people, in particular the younger generation, have amalgamated Cantonese with their sense of identity of being Chinese (local Hong Kong born Chinese). They are separating themselves from the rest of the population in China. You would quite often hear the younger generation calling themselves "I am a Hongkonger, not Chinese." This can also be a reason that many students are reluctant to speak Putonghua even when their proficiency level is quite high.

As a teacher at CUHK where I teach foundation English courses, my classes have a mixture of local, mainland Chinese and foreign students. It is quite common to see mainland Chinese students group together as they can use Putonghua to exchange ideas and communicate. Groups that have a mixture of mainland Chinese and local students, it is common these groups would start by using English, but somehow, the language used will gradually change to Cantonese. Similar observations were also witnessed by other teachers at the university. A professor at CUHK noticed during discussion time, a non-local student sat silently in a group of four. While the rest of the group members discussed in Cantonese, the non-local student just sat there unable to participate in the discussion. This raises the challenge Cantonese brings to the adaptation experiences among mainland Chinese students.

In addition, one respondent felt that she had lost interest in joining college activities at CUHK because of the language barrier of Cantonese. She shared her experience when she joined a few activities arranged by her college at her initial arrival, no local students approached and talked to her. She found the inability to communicate in Cantonese had made her lose interest in joining college activities. She further shared if she had known local students were organizing these activities, she would not have joined. When asked at the interview if she had joined any college activities after these experiences, she answered no. She said the experience made her feel

extremely negative and she thought if she could speak in Cantonese, her experience would be much different.

From the findings, it can be generalized that those who could speak Cantonese have had a smoother transitional and adaptation experiences at CUHK. A respondent revealed a positive experience because she could speak Cantonese, which was a big contrast compared with those who could not speak Cantonese.

> *Ivan:* *"Perhaps I could speak Cantonese, so I could get along well with local students in my hostel and courses quite well. Based on my observation, many local students began to show hatred towards students who speak Putonghua. Therefore, being able to speak Cantonese has avoided negative experiences in the first few months here at CUHK."*

As a matter of fact, this is somewhat of a different experience compared with other interviewees and respondents. This is not commonly seen among the other interviewees and respondents.

Language barrier in Cantonese has also increased conflicts among students. A respondent shared that language barrier, in particular the use of Cantonese, caused a lot of misunderstandings and miscommunication. She shared that most local students are friendly and enthusiastic when offering help to mainland students. However, the inability to communicate in Cantonese with local students have made the experiences at CUHK difficult, yet challenging. One example the participant (Ben) illustrated was local students tended to form groups together in group projects and when asked to join their group, similar comments included "*Oh, we have enough people already*", "*Sorry our friend is going to join*" were heard. Another participant (Ivan) further added that even if local students allowed us to join, they looked "*reluctant*", "*unwilling to*" or "*being forced to*". The facial expressions did not only make them feel awkward and uneasy, but also embarrassed and disappointed. Participant (Ben) further added if they were grouped by the professors, local students would use Cantonese in their interaction or simply just ask Mainland Chinese students to do most of the work alone, while the local students would work closely together. These experiences had provided negative or hard feelings for Mainland Chinese students, making their adaptation experiences more difficult as shared by many participants.

Nevertheless, some students also pointed out contrasting view in language barrier related to Cantonese. They pointed out that even for those mainland Chinese students can speak Cantonese,

adaptation issues still appear. It is clear that even the same Cantonese, the same dialect can be regarded as two varieities (Yu & Zhang, 2016). The Cantonese used in Mainland China and Hong Kong is different in certain level. The differences include pronunciation, word choice, linguistic style and accent (Poon, 2010; Cheng & Tang, 2014; Yu & Zhang, 2016). For example, it is quite common to see local students code-switch between English and Cantonese, which is a typical linguistic style observed among local Hong Kong students. However, this does not seem to be something common or typically found among mainland Chinese students. Another example is the word choice which differs in Hong Kong and Mainland China. Below are two unique responses from participants which clearly differentiate the differences between the use of "Chinese" in spoken context.

Ivan: *I can speak fluent Cantonese because I was born in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province but I notice many words used in Mainland are quite different from those in Hong Kong. Even when we all speak Cantonese, the word choices seem different. In mainland, we use "da di" for taxi, whereas it's "dik si". This is only one of the many examples.*

Alan: *Many of the word choices seem very different such as bus ("gong che" versus "ba shi"), discount ("da jit" versus "jit"), air-conditioner ("kong tiao" versus "lang hei"), etc. So some of the terms and expressions, even though are in Cantonese, I didn't quite know what they mean. This kind of differences still exists for us who can speak Cantonese.*

The individual interview and focus group data showed a significant issue of linguistic adaptation in Cantonese. It shows that mainland Chinese students need to adapt to a completely new and complex linguistic environment in Hong Kong. Previous literature on adaptation reported linguistic adaptation is frequently a barrier for students who study in foreign countries (Chen, 1999; Yu, 2013; Yu & Downing, 2012). Yu (2013) supports that a smooth and favorable academic adaptation is determined by second language competency. Second language proficiency is also found to be an important indicator of socio-cultural adaptation (Yu & Downing, 2012). This is somewhat true for mainland Chinese students but differs in some ways. While some would consider English is a second language for mainland Chinese students, in fact, Chinese (Cantonese) is also a second language for mainland Chinese students. In this conjunction, these students are not dealing with or adapting to two different languages, but three when sojourning in Hong Kong.

5.7.2.2 Sub-theme 2: English

As mentioned previously, due to the influence of being a British Colony for 99 years, English still has a crucial role in Hong Kong, in particular academics. As CUHK, a higher education institution that stresses on internationalization, English is a medium of instruction in many major subjects and majors. This is also true in the academic (higher education) domains in Hong Kong. Tertiary education in Hong Kong has been "*largely shaped by British models and practices, given that during the 155 years of British colonization, numerous Western features were interwoven into Hong Kong's social, economic and political policies*" (Ding, Kuo & Van Dyke, 2008, p.532-533) "*and adopting English as a medium of instruction is one of these legacies"* (Yu & Zhang, 2016). With the English is predominantly used in academic purposes including lectures, reading materials, medium of instructions, communication within academic settings, and assignments and assessment. Through findings from surveyed and interviewed respondents, it was discovered that another language barrier apart from Cantonese was English.

In question related to the exposure to English learning, findings showed a trend that English learning was limited to classroom learning. In the question asking about the number of hours English was taught each week in respondents' secondary/high school, more than 6 hours was the top answer (38.1%) while 4 hours (17.5%) and 6 hours (9.5%) were answers followed (Appendix 18). In particular, grammar, writing and reading were the main focuses in the English curriculum in Mainland China. In fact, the English these Mainland Chinese students had in their secondary education was mainly reading and writing. Similar comments frequently appeared in both individual and group interviews.

Kyle: *In secondary school, we focused heavily on grammar and memorizing vocabulary.*

June: *We had to write but just around 100 words.*

Bonnie: *We wrote about 200 to 250 words but usually story writing.*

Ivan: *We read very little but we read aloud in class every day.*

Vicky: *Grammar was what we were taught a lot in. Every lesson was about grammar.*

Besides the differences in English curriculum between Hong Kong and Mainland China, an interesting comment by a respondent about native English teachers had never come across:

Lisa: *I know from friends that Hong Kong schools have foreigners as English teachers but that was not the case in my secondary school. My English teachers mainly used Mandarin to teach English. Some of the pronunciation was different from what I heard when I was in Hong Kong.*

Interviewer: *Do you think it would make a difference if foreigners taught English in China?*

Lisa: *Yes, at least I have more opportunities to use English with the foreigner teacher. One more thing, foreigners tend to have better English.*

Interviewer: *What do you mean by "better English"?*

Lisa: *They must have accurate pronunciation.*

Perhaps this is one of the uniqueness in Hong Kong education. The Hong Kong government and Education Bureau began introducing the "Native-speaking English Teaching (NET) Scheme in 1998 in the aim "*to enhance the teaching of English language and increase the exposure of students to English*" (Education Bureau, 1997). This in fact is related to some participants who mentioned that in China they had very little exposure to an English environment, with some had never immersed in an English-speaking environment. Many did not attend any English courses or study tours in English speaking countries or non-English speaking countries outside of Mainland China. In the question surveyed about whether respondents took English language courses/private lessons outside of school before entering CUHK, 66.7% and 33.3% reported yes and no respectively (see Appendix 14.4). This question was carried on in individual and focus group interviews to understand the rationale behind of taking language courses/private lessons outside of school before coming to Hong Kong. Respondents explained that since they thought the English learning at their secondary schools was inadequate, they voluntarily took English language courses/private lessons. Some respondents said the decision was based on their own willingness to achieve better English proficiency while a few respondents reported the decision was influenced by their friends, family and relatives who had studied abroad.

Bonnie: *My distant cousin studies in an international school in Shenzhen and she told me that my English is quite weak. So, I thought if I wanted to go elsewhere to study university, I must improve my English.*

Ivan: *In recent years, many foreigners have begun teaching English in China. They would teach in private tutorial lessons or video-conferences. You pay for a number of lessons and these foreigners would teach you English in person or through video*

conferencing. However, the lessons are mostly conversational. I tried out for a few months but I did not find them too useful.

As respondents explained an English-speaking environment was not available, their use of English was limited to merely inside the classroom. Even so, not all teachers would use solely English in English lessons. Many schools in Mainland China use Putonghua as a medium of instruction in teaching, including English (Lam, 2005; Wu et al., 2010). Because of this reason, many Mainland Chinese students attended English language courses or private lessons outside school, readying themselves to study abroad or outside of China. This demonstrated a trend that Mainland Chinese students see the importance of equipping themselves with better English, thus seek additional support and help in improving their English proficiency when they find English in classroom is inadequate. Based on my understanding and observation, it appears that there is a gap between secondary and tertiary education among these mainland Chinese students. When these students seeking tertiary education in Hong Kong upon graduating from secondary/high schools, they immerse into a totally new language environment without having adequate time to prepare and adapt themselves to English medium education. Thus, language barrier issues arise.

In addition, findings also revealed that mainland Chinese students faced difficulty in integrating themselves into their studies at CUHK because most of the major courses are delivered in English. They also had trouble understanding their professors and teachers. As most of the major courses are taught in English, the biggest challenge faced by Mainland Chinese students is that they could not understand what professors or teachers were saying in lectures. As reading materials were in English with a lot of technical terms, academic vocabulary and general vocabulary could not be understood. In fact, results from findings also suggested some of the respondents could not get adjusted to lectures in English even after half a year. They could not just get used to the medium of instruction in English which became one of the major obstacles in their adaptation experience in Hong Kong. In addition, being unable to express themselves in English was also a common trait among these Mainland Chinese students. Many shared that they found it difficult to communicate with professors and students in English. They lacked confidence and many even avoided talking with others due to the language barrier. Moreover, two additional experiences which appeared often were accent and pronunciation. Mainland Chinese students often felt their accent and pronunciation affected their points to be understood by other students and professors or teachers. This phenomenon was also observed in my English lessons. In many occasions, when

I asked Mainland Chinese students to share their thoughts, they would be reluctant to speak. Sometimes they would even ask if they could use Putonghua to express their thoughts. When I asked them to try, they would try a bit but give up easily. They would try to translate their thoughts into English instead of thinking in English and deliver their thoughts. This, again, could be a result of the learning style in Mainland China and English proficiency.

The result of language barrier in English is mainly because of the inadequate exposure to the use of English in their daily lives. Apart from having English lessons in secondary schools, these students had almost no other opportunity to use English in their daily lives. Unlike Hong Kong, where English plays such a significant role, it is reasonable that Mainland Chinese students find themselves below par when it comes to English proficiency. Findings also revealed that majority of the respondents felt their English is poor and that they felt that they should improve in their speaking, listening and use of vocabulary.

5.7.3 Theme 3: Academic Pressure

Academic pressure is another experience Mainland Chinese students faced in their first year of study at CUHK. In fact, academic pressure is one of the major worries and anxieties respondents have when they were asked about what they are most worried/feared/anxious about in the coming year at CUHK. Academic pressure is a result of language barrier. In terms of academic pressure, the most frequent word that arose was "GPA" (grade point average). In particular, respondents shared in both questionnaire and interview about their low proficiency in English would directly affect their study, hence affect their GPA. Many of the Mainland Chinese students wanted to utilize the opportunity of studying at CUHK as a stepping stone to study abroad, be it postgraduate studies or exchange programmes. They realized that the only way to succeed in securing a place in postgraduate studies and exchange programmes is to obtain a reasonably high GPA. While the medium of instruction in most major courses at CUHK, these Mainland Chinese students fear their English would be a barrier to achieve good grades in their courses.

Pressure comes from different sources and academic generates the biggest level of pressure among Mainland Chinese students. In recent years, a growing number of Mainland Chinese students has resorted to committing suicide due to academic pressure. In 2007, a Mainland student hanged himself in the hostel at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST). This is not the only case. Over the last decade, various Mainland students had resorted to committing

suicide because of the difficulty to cope with their study and pressure. In a study conducted by Cheung (2013), findings indicated that Mainland Chinese students studying in higher education institutions in Hong Kong found their experiences unsatisfactory. In fact, academic, social cultural and financial challenges were found to be factors affecting their satisfactory level during their stay in Hong Kong.

In addition, it was found in the findings that some respondents see Hong Kong as a stepping stone for further studies overseas. As Hong Kong is geographically closer to Mainland China, Hong Kong is an ideal place for these Mainland Chinese students to study in. They can easily go back to their hometown during weekends and long breaks. Unlike studying in overseas countries like the UK or USA, travelling time is long and expensive. Mainland Chinese students have various channels and choices like taking a bus or flying out from Hong Kong or even Shenzhen back to their hometown is convenient and inexpensive, especially those who live in Guangdong province. What is more, with the recent tightened policy in granting foreign student visas and reducing the number of international students, many Mainland Chinese students begin seeking alternatives. As mentioned by some of the respondents in the questionnaire and interviews, universities in Hong Kong, such as the HKU, CUHK and HKUST have high global rankings. Therefore, they do not mind coming to Hong Kong for their undergraduate studies in view that they can use the four year time to improve their English, hence be able to go abroad for postgraduate studies. As stated in Chapter 2, both students and parents believe that having a foreign degree will increase competitiveness and be extremely advantageous in the future be it postgraduate studies or future career.

5.8 Linguistic Experiences

Under the theme of "social-cultural experiences", six sub-themes have been generated when investigating the socio-cultural experiences of respondents. The six sub-themes are friendship, discrimination, culture, identity, loneliness, and politics.

5.8.1 Theme 1: Meeting friends/Friendship

In the questionnaire distributed to all year one mainland Chinese students, two questions asked whether they have made any friends with local students since their arrival at CUHK and if they find any difficulties getting along with friends/classmates whom they have met at CUHK. 93.7% of the respondents had made friends and 63.5% did not find any difficulties getting along with the

friends they met. Only 6.3% of the respondents have not made any friends with local students (see Appendix 16.2). Although results from the questionnaire showed that majority of mainland Chinese students were able to make friends (see Appendix 16.1) and had no difficulties getting along with local friends they have met, some respondents showed contrasting answers in the individual and focus group meetings. In the individual interviews, quite a number of respondents shared that they had trouble making friends with local students because they felt that local students were biased. Some further explained that many local students dislike or even show hatred towards mainland students without any concrete reasons at times.

This can be related to the recent political turmoil and incidents which have raised conflicts between "mainlanders and Hongkongers". The tense relationship between Hong Kong people and mainlanders began in early 2000s. Since the return of sovereignty in 1997, Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region of China and is ruled under the one country, two systems principle. That means, Hong Kong is still a part of China but is granted a separated legal system. In the late 1990s when Hong Kong faced financial crisis, Hong Kong and the central government have encouraged mainland visitors to visit Hong Kong, hoping to boost the economy. Since then, mainland China has opened up visiting quotas for its citizens to visit and travel to Hong Kong. Throughout the years, an influx of mainland tourists come to Hong Kong to make purchases ranging from milk powder to properties, pushing up demand substantially for Hong Kong people. In addition, the number of pregnant women coming to Hong Kong to give birth has increased rapidly from 7810 in 2001 to 27574 in 2007 and 40648 in 2010 (Legislative Council Secretariat, 2012). The influx of pregnant Mainland women flocking to Hong Kong to give birth had flooded the public hospitals and put pressure in the already over-loading public health services. More recently, mainland Chinese parents have been sending their children to Hong Kong to seek primary education, causing a shortage of school places in districts near the border. These are just some of the major events, adding to a number of minor incidents and events (e.g. uncivilized behaviours, not following to common rules and regulations, etc.) have further intensified tensions between mainlanders and Hong Kong. Some Hong Kong people even express hostility towards mainlanders while xenophobic slurs (e.g. name calling) are becoming more common (Li, 2019).

When moving to a new place, it is important to make friends as they could be a source of external support. Findings from interview and questionnaires showed a contrasting view of making friends

with local students as mentioned earlier in this section. For example, the feelings of isolation, maltreatment, etc. had repeatedly appeared in group discussions.

Eva: I always have the feeling of feeling lonely, being isolated, and maltreated by local students. I really wanted to go back to China. I sometimes regret my decision coming to Hong Kong.

Sonia: Local students do not want to accept the fact that Hong Kong has returned to China and is a part of China. This is the truth but it seems that many Hong Kong students do not want to accept.

Frank: Language is a barrier which causes a lot of misunderstandings and miscommunication…I was really astonished and angry with some local students' offensive comments such as calling us "bigsixers" or "locust".

The above sharing implies that making friends could be difficult because of reasons related to politics, language barrier, biased and values and beliefs. In fact, these reasons have appeared quite often during the interview. They inter-relate with one another, meaning that those who found difficulties in making friends with local students also faced issues with language barrier, cultural issues, etc. Of the 36.5% respondents who found difficulties got along with local friends/classmates whom they met at CUHK. The most commonly reported difficulties were difficulty in communication, language barrier, limited topics to talk about, differences in ways of thinking, prejudice against China, and cultural differences. It is worth to note that the difficulty in making friends and getting along with local students is closely related to cultural differences as indicated in the findings. In one of the group interviews, one student said, "s*ometimes we have different ideas over things because of different cultural backgrounds. But I think it is acceptable and I feel okay to deal with the difficulties. Maybe mainland students and local students only meet together in classes. If there are more opportunities to have social networking and communication activities, I think it may improve the situation."*

Though some respondents felt difficulties making friends and getting along with local students, a majority of respondents surveyed and interviewed in fact made friends with local students and did not have difficulties getting along with them. In fact, in responding to the question which was intended to explore the extent to which respondents felt that making friends with local students at CUHK can help the deal with the challenges/difficulties faced (see Appendix 16.3), respondents tended to be positive towards local friends being helpful in their adaptation with 41.3%, 19% and

14.3 showing agree to totally agree. However, while approximately a quarter of the respondents (6.3% and 19%) showed disagreement, none totally disagreed. To an optional follow-up question asking respondents to share their experience, those who responded pointed out positive examples like that their local classmates/friends were always helpful, helping them enjoy their school life, broadening their horizons, offering helpful and useful information in course selection, polishing their Cantonese, getting a better view and idea of Hong Kong, and helping them fit in easier. Only two respondents shared negative comment as "*because we do have difficult political stance, I do prefer making friends with mainland students*", and "*I have not encountered any difficulty in meeting and getting along with local friends in person; however, I found the situation extremely different on the Internet. I often see people holding grudges against mainlanders through posts on social media. This could be a result of differences in political stance and opinion, yet the stereotype of the image on mainlanders was developed*."

Based on my observation in classes and on campus, some local students are quite helpful and offer a lot of help to mainland students. For example, the English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU) where I teach in, we organize regular social activities for local and non-local students to join such as movie nights, Valentine's Day special, outdoor hiking activities, etc. I do see both local and non-local students joining these activities and getting along well. In some occasions, some local students even take the initiative to help mainland students when they could not understand Cantonese or English. Yet, it is also common to see non-local students, in particular mainland students, grouping themselves together. We, teachers, have to re-group the students to make a fair balance between local and non-local students in a group so they could interact and try to get along with one another.

5.8.2 Theme 2: Discrimination

Two other keywords frequently appeared in the findings were prejudice and discrimination. Though these two keywords were mentioned by surveyed and interviewed respondents, the frequency gradually increased in stage 3 and 4 when several political turmoil took place in Hong Kong. Theme 1 discussed mostly about linguistic experiences and academic pressure derived from these experiences, mainland Chinese students also have to adapt to a "*discriminatory society where mainland Chinese are the major target*" (Yu & Zhang, 2016, p.11). The discrimination against mainland Chinese is not a new issue. In fact, it began in the 1980s when China began opening up

after Deng Xiaoping, the former prominent leader introduced economic reforms. At the time, immigrants from Mainland China were often the discriminatory target in public domain such as Hong Kong TV dramas (Ma, 1999). After the handover in 1997, the contact between Hong Kong and Mainland appeared more frequently with the increasing number of Mainland Chinese going to Hong Kong to travel, trade, work and study (Chan, 2008; Zhao & Chen, 2008).

In early 2000s, more mainlanders began coming to Hong Kong to travel, trade, do business and study. This was a result of the government beginning to relax traveling and trading policies for mainland Chinese citizens as well as the SARS breakout in 2003 which had devastated the city and economy. What is more, as the economic booms in China during the late 2000s, mainlanders began flooding to Hong Kong to purchase luxury goods, which in fact helped boost the slowing economy in Hong Kong. This, however, turned out to be a tension and conflict between mainlanders and Hongkongers. Although mainlanders and Hongkongers are ethnically the same group of people, one of the biggest differences witnessed is the culture. Hongkongers have always prided themselves as well-manner individuals. However, numerous incidents made these mainlanders seemed boorish and uncivilized. These incidents included but not limited to speaking loudly and rudely in public, squatting on busy streets especially in shopping districts, jostling each other to get food in restaurants (Friedman, 2013), lacking etiquette and basic social manner, defecating on streets and public places and even indoor shopping malls. These incidents further provoked conflicts between mainlanders and Hongkongers. These conflicts triggered arguments, fights, and even name calling. In 2012, an advertisement was placed in a popular tabloid by a group of Hong Kong residents. In the advertisement, mainlanders were called "locust", a term which is used to insult mainlanders who come to Hong Kong to consumer resources and leave a mess behind (Custer, 2017). The donors who raised over HK$100,000 for the advertisement in less than a week warned that possible social conflicts could be inflicted. They included lines like "*The city is dying, you know?", "Hongkongers have had enough!*".

In the same year, Hong Kong residents took the matter to an escalated level by protesting on streets to show discontent in events including an influx of mainland mothers coming to Hong Kong to give birth, mainlanders refusing to follow rules and order, mainlanders taking away local benefits and social welfare combined with frustration over political reform and the increasing influence from the China PRC Government. The tension between Hongkongers and mainlanders has grown

stronger over the years. In 2014, a mainlander posted a questionnaire on an online forum to collect views on how Hongkongers below 30 years old view their own identity (EJ Insight, 2019). A respondent claimed himself as a "Hongkonger", someone from Hong Kong, to distinctly separate himself from being a part of China. However, Hong Kong is an inseparable part of China. According to official document, "*Hong Kong is a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. Following British rule from 1842 to 1997, China assumed sovereignty under the 'one country, two systems' principle. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's constitutional document, the Basic Law, ensures that the current political situation will remain in effect for 50 years. The rights and freedoms of people in Hong Kong are based on the impartial rule of law and an independent judiciary*" (GovHK, 2018, n.p.). In short, those who are permanent residents of Hong Kong are Chinese, the same ethnic group and nationality. In one of the dialogue with a respondent (Jackie), she felt that local students were prejudiced and had an issue with identity.

Jackie:	*I felt that local students are prejudiced. They do not like the mainland Chinese government, so they do not accept their identity as Chinese but called themselves "Hongkongers."*
Interviewer:	*Why do you think that is the case?*
Jackie:	*Well…I think they have some misconceptions. Hong Kong is not a country. It is a part of China whether you like it or not. This is low quality of some local students. It also shows their sense of belonging is very low.*

In addition, participants felt that many local Hongkongers do in fact discriminate against mainlanders and this could be an influence from the media. In the late 70s and 80s, television dramas often nicknamed Chinese immigrants "countryside" men and "ah charng", a contemptuous term used in a television drama in 1979 to describe immigrants from mainland China. The term is still currently in use to describe mainlanders whether they are immigrants or visitors. This kind of discrimination indeed is influenced by the media but a new term, "locust" was made up in 2015 to describe the visitors from mainland China who converge their cash on purchasing everything from luxurious goods to milk powder (Tsang, 2015). Several respondents mentioned similar experience regarding to prejudice and discrimination in the group interview. First, common experiences associated with prejudice and discrimination took place during orientation camp, an activity organized by student-led committees at the university to help freshmen understand and

then adapt to the culture and lifestyle at the university. It also aims to boost a sense of belonging to the university.

Nathan: *During Orientation Camp, some local students called me "locust".*

Interviewer: *Do you know what "locust" means?*

Nathan: *Not really but I know it's a name calling. Probably say we are worms and coming to Hong Kong to ruin everything.*

Interview: *Anyone else has been called "locust"?*

James: *Well, I heard Hong Kong students calling some mainland students "locust" but no one called me that…at least I don't think they called me that.*

Interview: *How did you feel even though you were called "locust"?*

James: *Honestly, not good. I was also isolated in the orientation camp, which made me feel frustrated and made me want to go back to China.*

Nathan: *I agree with him (James). I feel that a lot of local students discriminate mainland students especially in the orientation camp. I remember someone lost money in the camp and someone blamed the mainland students.*

Name-calling is a common reported discrimination act reported by respondents in both individual and group interviews. Such phenomenon is not only reported in Hong Kong nor against Mainland Chinese students. Other ethnic groups like African and Vietnamese (Iwara, Obadire & Amaechi, 2018) also reported this type name-calling discrimination act. When asked how they felt when they heard the names such as "locust", "mainlanders", etc. Most participants reported somewhat negative feelings like "I felt hurt", "It is unfair", "I wasn't happy", "I don't understand why" or "I was sad". Only very few participants revealed having neutral feeling. One participant expressed a very disheartening example of this discrimination act and how it affected her deeply.

Iris: *I remember reading a news article about Hong Kong people telling mainland people to go back to their home. I saw a local man telling a mainland Chinese tourist off by telling him not to eat and talk so loud on the train. This ordeal turned into an argument. The local man called the tourist "get out you Big 6 dog" (Big 6 means China as it means mainland) and the mainland tourist called the local man "bastard and running dog".*

Name-calling, a discrimination act, can be detrimental to students' emotions and self-esteem, especially cross-border students or student sojourners. It is a form of bullying and in some cases

can lead to violence (Jenkins & Gordon, 2020) or in worst scenario, suicidal intention. This is one incident reported is a typical example of how name-calling can cause emotional or psychological consequences to students.

Ken: *My friend (also from Mainland China) was called "locust" by one of our group members in a class. They got into an argument and broke into a fight. A senior student broke up the fight. Since then, he has often been depressed and repeatedly said that he wanted to go back home.*

Interviewer: *Do you know what "locust" means?*

Ken: *I think it's an insect that eats all the crops but…actually…I am not sure. I just know it's a bad name, very bad and negative.*

Interviewer: *How did you feel about the incident?*

Ken: *It was bad.*

Interviewer: *Can you explain what you meant by "bad"?*

Ken: *I mean I, of course, was not happy and I think that word "locust" is quite offensive. But some Hong Kong students seem not as mean. I don't know.*

Between 2000 and 2010, nine Mainland Chinese students committed suicide during their study in Hong Kong due to social challenges (Cheung, 2013). Unlike Hong Kong students, Mainland Chinese students usually lack support from families and friends (Cheung, 2013) and may be more vulnerable and fragile when they face issues or problems.

Two participants further elaborated on another participant's view on the phenomenon of discrimination. They both felt that Hong Kong students have a high level of hatred towards Mainland Chinese students because they felt that Mainland Chinese students had taken away many opportunities which they felt should be granted to Hong Kong students.

Ken: *I heard some local students saying in a hostel activity that because mainland students come to Hong Kong and take away scholarship and PhD places, local students don't get to study PhD in Hong Kong.*

Jon: *I think Hong Kong people are really prejudiced. They seem to blame mainlanders for everything such as the skyrocket prices of properties.*

Discrimination and prejudice are what many participants faced in their first year at CUHK which were consistent through interview and questionnaire findings. Although the two groups are

ethnically the same, much conflicts in terms of lifestyle, values and beliefs are arisen because of different culture and brought up. In the years after the handover of sovereignty, a closer relationship between Hong Kong and China has gradually developed. This relationship, however, has also been rocky because of the rumbling discontent about the number of mainland Chinese coming to Hong Kong to compete be it benefits and resources (BBC, 2014).

5.8.3 Theme 3: Culture

Language, lifestyle and habits are major differences between mainlanders and Hongkongers. As discussed in the earlier part, Sub-theme 1: Discrimination and prejudice, many respondents when sharing their views about discrimination and prejudice, the issue were often mentioned was cultural differences. It is undeniable the two groups -ethnically similar but with different backgrounds - have experienced a clash of cultures in recent years. Incidents like mainland tourists shouting and talking loudly in restaurants or other public facilities, pushing around to get through crowds, jumping queues and running over people with their suitcases, defecating in the public, lacking of respect and using force and violence, etc. are what frustrate Hong Kong people. While the older generation has a more difficult time adjusting to a different culture, the younger generation is expected to be able to adjust to the culture easier. Surveyed and interviewed students thought differently.

Dave: *The culture is very different between Hong Kong and China. Hong Kong is more western, like the city has a lot more English signposts and banners than in China. Also, people don't talk loudly in restaurants or streets. They don't shout out people's names loudly. This is what creates conflicts.*

Steve: *I guess Hong Kong has been educated in a more western way. They have a wider exposure so they are more polite and respectful. Mainland people, many of them are not very well educated. Some still spit on the street. I saw a mainland tourist spitting in the MTR station. I felt quite ashamed.*

Robin: *It's allowed to eat on public transportation in China but it's not allowed in Hong Kong. This triggers conflicts.*

The above sharing by participants in group interviews revealed that cultural differences and the low awareness of cultural differences appears to be a main source of conflict. Yet, higher education institutions in Hong Kong have not stepped up to eradicate this conflict and education this group of students. As mentioned earlier, student-led committees organize orientation camp

for freshman students so to help them adapt to the lifestyle and culture of the university and in Hong Kong easier. Yet, participants reported that many activities organized during orientation camps are "offensive and inappropriate".

> *Cindy: I thought the activities in the orientation camp would be more educational and practical to help me settle in and make friends. However, much of the activities were offensive and inappropriate such as a boy has to sit in front of a girl with a biscuit stick in his mouth and the girl would do sit-ups in order to reach and take a bite of the biscuit stick. The game may be trying to help students bond but I find it extremely offensive and inappropriate because the boy will touch me.*
>
> *Peter: Some teams literally kissed during the game. I was shocked and felt embarrassed but it seemed that local students and organizers felt fine with it.*

Similar incidents have been reported almost every year by the press and media. In 2008, a freshman was slapped about with pillows and cried for 15 minutes and in 2011, obscene short videos of orientation inappropriate and offensive games went viral on social media (Leung & Xu, 2011). While calls for universities to scrutinize games and activities organized in orientation games, every year similar news would appear in social media or reported by the press. The situation is often understated by universities. Consequently, the games and activities organized have been condemned for crossing a moral line and triggering ethical issues. Evidently, there is a huge gap in the cultural difference between Mainland China and Hong Kong. While student-led orientation camps aimed to help freshmen to adapt to university life, lifestyle in universities and Hong Kong, the purposes have not been served.

The low awareness of cultural differences has often been reported by the press and media. In 2018, a mainland Chinese woman was found taking photographs with her mobile phone in the courtroom during a trial and she claimed that certain rules in courtroom in Hong Kong and China are different (SCMP, 2018). She also commented she could not understand why the media would be following this type of case and could be audience in the courtroom (South China Morning Post, 2018). This incident is another good example of the different system and culture between Hong Kong and China, which often creates conflicts and tensions.

Another issue that concerns many local people, hence inflicts conflicts and tensions is the rise of luxury shops catering to affluent Mainland Chinese consumers. For example, luxury brands and shops now hire staff who speak Putonghua to serve and cater for the needs of this group of new

affluent shoppers. This phenomenon can also be witnessed in Hong Kong. Common strategies used by luxury shops are displaying signs or posts in simplified text instead of traditional text which is mainly used in Hong Kong, offering exclusive goods which are only available to be purchased in Hong Kong and promoting products which suit the taste of Mainland Chinese tourists yet neglecting local consumers. This further creates tensions between the two groups of people.

5.8.4 Theme 4: Identity

Social identity has become a mainstream topic which interests researchers, social scientists and politicians (Hamlet, 2017). By law, those who are Hong Kong permanent residents, holding a permanent identity card, is considered a Chinese citizen of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (GovHK, 2018). That said, they do not have to right to abode in China. To enter mainland China, Hong Kong permanent residents have to hold a Mainland Travel Permit for Hong Kong and Macao Residents which is also referred as a Home Return Permit or Home Visit Permit (GovHK, 2016). Holders of this travel document can enter Mainland China for all purposes within the valid period of the document. The permit states clearly in English and Chinese that "This card is intended for its holder to travel to the mainland of China". However, not all Chinese nationals in Hong Kong or Macau hold this permit. The application of this permit is completely voluntary. In the 1980s, an influx of Hong Kong permanent residents gave up their permanent residency and immigrated to foreign countries and became citizens there. By giving up the Hong Kong permanent resident status, these residents lose the right to apply for this permit. They would choose to use their passport where they got their citizenship and apply for a China Visa when entering Mainland China. This in some ways creates an identity issue. Moreover, many Hong Kong people, in particular the younger generation, are reluctant to call themselves Chinese.

This adaptation in the aspect of identity does not exist only in Hong Kong, but in overseas English-speaking countries. I recalled an incident when I asked a student of mine where she came from she said, "I am a Canadian." The truth, however, was that she was born in Hong Kong and had a few years of primary education, then immigrated with her family to Vancouver, Canada. When I engaged in a casual conversation with her, I asked her why she claimed herself as a Canadian, but not Chinese. She explained that her family immigrated to Canada when she was 9. Since then she spent most of her time in Canada until her family decided to move back to Hong Kong because her father's business went bankrupted. She further explained that she holds both a Canadian

passport and a Hong Kong Identity Card with permanent residency. This means she has obtained permanent citizen status in Canada and a permanent resident in Hong Kong. However, she is afraid of calling herself Chinese because when she was studying in Canada, she faced some issues related to discrimination. When her classmates asked where she was from, she said Hong Kong and immediately her classmates would say '*ni hao*' to her. They also made some rude comments that Chinese are all very rude. They like to squat and shout loudly in the public. A particular classmate of hers told her, '*My father said you Chinese people are barbarians. You guys come to Canada to buy all the expensive properties in the western districts. We native Canadians have to move away from and live in poor districts. Why don't you go back to China?*' The student said, '*I was a bit traumatized by this issue. In fact, that was not the only time I have heard those comments. Every time when Canadian friends know I am Chinese, they would ask which part of China I am from. No one recognized my birthplace is Hong Kong. Some classmates also denoted those who came from China and called them "Chinaman"*.

Another example was about a Korean-American. This young man was born in Korea and was adopted by a white family in Philadephia, USA. He recalled in an interview that he was often being discriminated by the white people in the USA and embracing an identity when growing up in the USA was difficult and challenging. In school, he would be made fun and bantered with nicknames "Ching Chang Chong", "Chinaman", and "Bruce Lee." He also shared the difficulties in growing up in a predominately white culture was isolating because both cultures would reject you for not "Asian enough" and "white enough". The young man faced years of discrimination and microaggressions, thus had suffered depression and anxiety. He felt awful about himself and hated himself for a shade of identity that he does not belong to either group. He turned to drugs to forget about the issues he faced and took it upon himself to escape from reality (Wong, 2018).

The above experiences from the Hong Kong born Canadian and Korean born American denoted that identity is often a socio-cultural adaptation experience when living or studying overseas. This indeed is in some way similar to some the surveyed and interviewed respondents. They questioned about the issue 'identity' as both groups who are born in Hong Kong and China are lawfully and ethnically Chinese. Hence, they do not understand why local students would discriminate them as they are from the same ethnic group. The following excerpt from a participant in the group

interview showed that "identity" is another social gap between Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese students.

Sandy: *It was a painful period in CUHK. When I participated in CUHK society cabinet election, one senior member spoke something unrespectable of my mainlander identity in Cantonese. At that time I didn't understand what he said, but I was told that by my friend later after the meeting that the member they said I am from China and I am a locust. I am a "countryside" person. So there was a period that I felt really frustrated towards local students. I don't understand why we are both Chinese and they would discriminate me. We are from one country and we are all Chinese.*

Robin *I am not sure why Hong Kong students don't want to call themselves Chinese. When I ask some of my friends in orientation camp, they would say I am not Chinese. I am a Hongkonger.*

Ally: *My Hong Kong friend told me he hates it when people say "ni hao" to him once they know he is Chinese. When people greet him with "ni hao", he would say, "I am not from China."*

Vivian: *Some Hong Kong students in the student union said China wants to govern Hong Kong and be the in charge and monitor politics and the economy. I don't understand this. Isn't Hong Kong a part of China? So what is wrong for China to monitor and govern Hong Kong?*

Not only has globalization increased interconnectedness in countries, societies, communities, economies, and cultures, but it has also raised issues such as identity and culture (Rosenmann, Reese & Cameron, 2016). Internationalization in higher education is a byproduct of globalization. Like many countries, higher education institutions have made effort in recruiting international students since the early millennium (Cheung et al., 2008; Cheung, 2013). From 2002 to 2007, the Hong Kong Government has made effort in recruiting non-local students to study in higher education institutions in Hong Kong (Hong Kong Government, 2007). Though Hong Kong has put active effort recruiting more international students from overseas countries to diversify the student population in the tertiary section hence achieve the aim of internationalization, Mainland China is still the largest contributing source country (University Grants Committee, 2010). While diversifying the student population has successfully achieved, the increase of Mainland Chinese students in studying Hong Kong has inflicted conflicts in identity. Findings from mainland Chinese students and real-life examples proved that the conflict relates more to the battle of

identity – and the acceptance of similarities and differences between the two groups. To mainland Chinese students, the idea and concept of "one country and two systems" may be blur and vague as they are not familiar with the history of Hong Kong being a British Colony. What they merely knew what about the return to China in 1997. Here is a different comment found among all surveyed and interviewed respondents which could also give some understanding to the conflict related to identity. The term "censorship" has rarely arisen in group interviews but this participant had shed light on how "censorship" has caused them to have very little or different misunderstandings towards the culture and lifestyle in Hong Kong. Content were often controlled and censorship. Yet, when he is in Hong Kong now, he has free access to information and allows him to understand different issues and matters in different perspectives and angles.

Ray: *In China, we don't study history about Hong Kong. What we know about the history of Hong Kong is that China lost Hong Kong to Britain in a war and the deal was 99 years. In the early 1980s, Deng Xiaopeng intended to take Hong Kong back from Britain and the year set was 1997.*

Interviewer: *So what do you know about Hong Kong then?*

Ray: *Honestly, we know really little about Hong Kong because first traveling to Hong Kong in the past was not as easy as now. You need to apply for a travel visa and you must have a valid reason to travel to Hong Kong.*

Interviewer: *How about reading news about Hong Kong in mainland?*

Ray: *To be frank, I hear that Hong Kong is a very western city where you may not survive if you only speak Putonghua.*

Interviewer: *Who did you hear from? Or did you read Hong Kong newspaper?*

Ray: *I heard from my friends in China who have families in Hong Kong. You know, the news we read and watch in China is one-sided and controlled. We only read from the press which is approved by the Chinese government. Therefore, a lot of things are blocked in China. Even the internet, the Chinese government censors and scrutinizes what can be published.*

Interviewer: *When you are in Hong Kong, do you read more from different channels?*

Ray: *Yes, as a matter of fact after studying in Hong Kong now, one good thing is the news in Hong Kong is from multi-angled. I can read news from the media which favors and disfavors local or Chinese government. I also have free access to internet websites, forums and tabloids. We have more ability to critically evaluate what we read to get a better and deeper understanding of issues, particularly political issues.*

Meanwhile to Hong Kong students, their identity is interfered and affected by what happened in the city and the level of freedom they enjoy. The strong indigenous of Hong Kong identity often confuses mainland Chinese students. The two views tend to clash and inflict conflicts in identity. Nonetheless, the sense of belonging among Hong Kong younger generation has seen a historically low in the last decade caused by a number of scandals in China as well as the active involvement in laws and politics from Beijing. This further increases tensions between the two groups, thus deepens the segregation which has already developed. This indeed aroused young politicians, activists and localists calling for 'pro-democracy' which has added fuel to the already tense relationship between the two groups.

5.8.5 Theme 5: Loneliness

Loneliness was another commonly expressed adaptation experience among surveyed and interviewed respondents. Various literature reported mobile students in higher education are at risk group of facing adaptation challenge such as loneliness (Parr, Bradley & Bingi, 1992; Zhai, 2002; Sherry, Thomas & Chui, 2010; Antwi & Ziyati, 1993; Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland & Ramia, 2008). Although international students are often resilient, they are, however, often very lonely in a brand new environment. Researchers also reported international students in Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and other parts of Europe experienced personal and social loneliness (Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland & Ramia, 2008; Zhai, 2002; Adelman, 1988; McClure, 2007; Zhao, Jindal-Snape, Topping & Todman, 2008). Personal loneliness can be defined as the lack of familiar friends and social networks while social loneliness can be defined as the unfamiliar cultural and linguistic background/environment (Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland & Ramia, 2008). Similar findings were found among the surveyed and interviewed respondents where many of them reported loneliness in the adaptation experience at CUHK. One of the most typical keywords appeared in group interviews was "loneliness". "Loneliness" as reported by participants is often a result of unable to fit in local social circles, cultural differences, different values, ideologies and beliefs.

> *Peter:* *I find that there are limited topics in my daily conversation with the local students. I often have nothing to say and even in hostel, I remain quiet because I can't contribute to a conversation. I feel quite lonely because my roommate is a local student. We don't have a similar network of friends so I can only chat with my friends or text my friends in China.*

Ally: *Hong Kong and mainland students think very differently. It could be a result of different cultural background. I have some Hong Kong friends but we are not so close. Even when I join their activities, I feel lonely as it feels as I am being isolated.*

Ray: *I don't have any real friends and I feel lonely.*

Dave: *We have different ideas over values and beliefs. We are from very different cultural background. Being unable to communicate and engage with local students, I hide myself and feel quite lonely and isolated.*

Sonia: *Not many local students share similar values with me not to mention language barrier. Therefore, I can't talk to Hong Kong students because they will look down on me. This is why I feel lonely all the time.*

Robin: *It is just difficult to fit in to local students' groups. I only have mainland friends and sometimes I am lonely. Even in class when I try to join local students' groups, they will speak in Cantonese and I felt so left out and isolated.*

Eva: *Sometimes I feel lonely for I can't find friends to study together.*

When cross-border students leave their hometown to pursue education in a new environment, they leave behind their families, friends, habits, cultures, social networks and citizenship rights (Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland & Ramia, 2008) which is distant. Newly arrived international students have to face brand new living environment, meet and acquaint a new network of friends, adapt to a new language and study setting as well as some new unfamiliar rules and regulations both in institution and life. It is quite common when students cannot face and tackle the challenges, they often withdraw and detach themselves from the people around them. As a result, they feel lonely and would isolate themselves in order to avoid conflicts. In the question in the online questionnaire asking whether respondents have made any friends with local students since their arrival at CUHK, 93.7% of the respondents revealed they have made friends with local students. In the follow-up question asking whether they have found any difficulties getting along with friends/classmates who they have met at CUHK, 36.5% and 63.5% answered yes and no respectively. This implied that a large portion of students did not encounter difficulties when getting along with local students. Those who faced problems reported issues cultural differences, differences in values and beliefs, different political stance and unable to fit in with local students. To rectify or avoid conflicts and clashes with local students, mainland Chinese students would involuntarily detach themselves and avoid having close contact with local students. As they felt unhappy when being together with local students, they would choose to isolate themselves from social activities and resort to hanging out with friends from Mainland China or do things on their

own. In long run, doing things alone and withdrawing themselves from social activities, these students would feel lonely, and thus feel homesick. In some extreme cases, some of these students developed mental issues like depression and worst of all, some resorted to committing suicide. There has been a growing number of Mainland Chinese students committing suicide in Hong Kong. In 2017, a mainland Chinese student hanged himself in the hostel at University of Science and Technology (HKUST). The victim was found to suffer from depression as he had problems interacting with local students and isolated himself (SCMP, 2007). Moreover, more mainland Chinese students have approached the Student Counselling and Development Service (SCDS) at CUHK for assistance. In the year of 2014/15, the SCDS received 725 requests for service from full-time students at CUHK. Among the 725 requests, 188 (26%) were Mainland Chinese students. All these indicate that Mainland Chinese students isolating and detaching themselves could have detrimental effect on their mental health.

5.8.6 Theme 6: Politics

Since Hong Kong returned to China in 1997, the number of mainland Chinese students enrolled in publicly funded universities has escalated from 1,000 to more than 12,000, contributing to more than 70 per cent of all non-local students enrolled (University Grants Committee, 2017). In the previous sub-theme, identity was founded to be one of the adaptation experiences in the socio-cultural aspect. In the accounts of respondents, many mentioned things related to politics such as the handover in 1997, "one country two system", political beliefs, the more recent pro-independence matter, etc. It seems that identity and political stance interconnect with each other. Studying in Hong Kong, a highly-politicalized city, surveyed and interviewed respondents have found unfavorable adaptation experiences. Yu and Zhang (2016) found in their study that Mainland students, who are born and educated in a socialist system found it difficult to understand the 'political chaos' at the beginning. The so-called 'Mainland-Hong Kong Conflict' seemed difficult to understand. They felt that the relationship between Hong Kong and Mainland China has in some degree been subverted. Similar findings appeared in group and individual interviews:

Kristie: I am here to study, not to pursue any political activities. Local students tend to show hatred towards our political views. In reality, many of us don't have a political view, not to mention a political view towards Hong Kong.

Chris: I attend a college activity and I believe one student discussed a political issue which I don't quite understand. My friend in the hostel that night told me they hated China

for gradually taking control over Hong Kong like they abolished election of our own Chief Executive. I was a bit confused about the election of a Chief Executive issue because in China, we have no such thing as election.

Aaron: I feel sad that sometimes the environment seems to be Hong Kong students versus mainland students. However, aren't we from one country? Why do we contest each other?

Mass participation such as protests and social movements appeared quite frequently since 2003. Protests in Hong Kong generally relate to political issues such as demoralization and national identity (Wang, 2019). A participant mentioned about the Umbrella Revolution in the group interviews. The Umbrella Revolution or Umbrella Movement took place in 2014 and tens and thousands of Hong Kong people occupied major roadways and pathways across the city, especially in the city's financial centre, Central, shuttering businesses and bringing traffic to a halt. Protestors demanded a "true universal suffrage" which was an agreement which Beijing had reneged to grant the Hong Kong people in 2017 (Kaiman, 2014). On the contrary, protests in Mainland China were rare and even if there are, protestors seldom challenge the authority or legitimacy of the political leadership (Wang, 2019). Such huge differences in politics often cause misunderstandings and confusion. As reported by participants, they did not understand the rationale and could not share common views with Hong Kong people in the aspect of politics. This gap in the understanding in politics often is another trigger point to conflicts and tensions.

Ally: Before I arrived in Hong Kong, I remember reading an article about Umbrella Revolution in China. At that time, I wasn't sure why the students were on the street protesting. I also heard my friends telling me at CUHK that the Chinese government puts a lot of influences in Hong Kong universities such as controlling academia. All these seem new to me and I am not sure about the facts. One thing though I am sure is that all these aforementioned things have further drawn local and mainland students apart, increasing more conflicts and misunderstanding.

Peter: I read many uncensored news in Hong Kong and learned a lot about politics in Hong Kong. In mainland we learned about politics differently. Everything was very systemic and structured. But as I read those uncensored news I became scared because they said Beijing censors chats on Wechat and social media. I am not sure about all these are true or not but it seems that these news all discussed Beijing is taking a much tougher stance towards Hong Kong.

Tiger: Some locals just focus on the Cultural Revolution Parade and Tiananmen Square Massacre. This is unfair to the Communist Party. These incidents happened long

time ago and China is very different now. They still talk about old times only but forget how China has contributed to the world in different areas such as technologies, weapons, creation, etc.

Although 'politics' was not the most significant adaptation experience faced by interviewed and surveyed respondents, a number of respondents did share the experience in this aspect. As the political environment in Hong Kong has exacerbated over the years, politics would most likely remain a controversial issue in Hong Kong in the near future. The 'one country two systems' policy has guaranteed Hong Kong, although being an inalienable part of China, to enjoy a high degree autonomy which includes independent executive, legislative and judiciary power for at least 50 years (Wong, 2004). Many local Hong Kong people are skeptical about whether such high degree of autonomy will remain after 2047.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, a series of political events/turmoil took place after the initial round of individual and focus group interview. Below is a timeline showing a series of major events which people in Hong Kong believed to have contributed to the so-called "Hong Kong-Mainland Conflict".

Figure 4.1: Timeline of major events between 2010 and 2018

Table 4.1: Summary of major events included in the timeline above

Year	Event	Details of the Event
2010	Mainland Chinese women giving birth in Hong Kong	Mainland pregnant women gatecrashing and coming to Hong Kong to give birth, thus caused an outcry over shortages of maternity ward bed space. These babies born in Hong Kong would gain permanent residency and dodge China's one-child policy.
2011	Tour Guide Lee Qiaozhen verbally abused mainland tourists	Tour guide verbally abused mainland tourists for not buying at a jewelry shop and called them as "dogs". The ordeal turned into a physical fight between the tour guide and 3 tourists and all were arrested.
2012	Dolce & Gabbana controversy	Hong Kong citizens were prevented from taking pictures of window displays at Dolce & Gabbana flagship store in Tsim Sha Tsui in Hong Kong which sparked protests for a few days and attracted international media to report this incident.
2012	A Peking University publicly calling Hong Kong people "old dogs"	A Peking University publicly called Hong Kong people "old dogs" in the aftermath of a controversy over mainland tourists urinating and defecating in public places in Hong Kong.
2012	Parallel trading in Hong Kong	An influx of mainland parallel traders coming to the northern parts of Hong Kong to import goods and export them back to mainland. These products range from infant formula, household products, snacks, food, etc.
2012	Moral and National Education controversy	Moral and National Education (MNE) is a curriculum proposed by the Education Bureau of Hong Kong to replace the existing moral and civic education. The attempt to pass the compulsory curriculum in 2012 led to protests among secondary school students and members of the public, hunger strike and a week long classroom boycott.
2013	"The Great Kindergarten Scare"	A result of a spate of mainland pregnant women coming to Hong Kong to give birth years ago

		and were at the age of applying for kindergarten. This made parents of local preschoolers agitated and angry.
2014	Election of Chief Executive in 2017	Beijing ruled that while Hong Kong could pick its leader by "one person, one vote" in 2017, only two or three candidates could run. The candidates must win majority support from a 1,200-strong nominating committee likely to be dominated by Beijing loyalists, meaning Beijing's critics could be "screened out". This triggered a protest with protestors calling this “fake democracy” and demand universal suffrage.
2014	Umbrella Movement	Protestors took to the street and occupied the heart of the financial district for over two months and gradually sprang over other districts around the city. The protest lasted for 79 days and was triggered after Beijing ruled they would choose candidates standing for the Chief Executive Election in 2017.
2015	Racial abuse of Hong Kong football team	The Chinese Football Association mocked the multi-ethnic make-up of Hong Kong football team. Supporters of the Hong Kong football team in subsequent matches jeered when the Chinese national anthem was played for the Hong Kong team.
2015	Siu Yau-wai case	Localists marched to the Immigration Department to demand deportation of a 12-year-old mainland boy who overstayed in Hong Kong for nine years with his two-way permit which was issued 9 years ago. The boy’s parents are well and alive in mainland China.
2015	Anti-Mainlandisation motion	The motion, “Anti-Mainlandisation” aimed to defend and protect Hong Kong history and culture from the influence of mainland China and PRC government was voted down.
2017	Racial abuse of Hong Kong football team	During a football match in Hong Kong, fans of Guangzhou Evergrande displayed an

		"Annihilate British Dogs, Eradicate Hong Kong Independence Poison" banner.
2017	Pro-independence wall poster	Tensions arose among mainland students, Hong Kong students, CUHK staff and CUHK student union staff members over the content of posters/banners put up on the Democracy Wall at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. This incident also reignited Hong Kong Independence debate in Hong Kong.
2018	Promotion of Mandarin/Putonghua	Two decades after the handover of Hong Kong, the position of Mandarin/Putonghua has gained significant importance, leading Cantonese to be neglected. The fear of losing Cantonese over Mandarin/Putonghua caused an uproar in Hong Kong. Linguists from both HKU and CUHK spoke publicly to defend the important of Cantonese in the city as the most important dialect and official language.

The so-called 'Hong Kong-Mainland Conflict' posed an immense impact on the relationship between Hongkongers and mainlanders which could be reflected in the relationship between local and mainland Chinese students at CUHK. Exacerbation of conflicts between local and mainland Chinese students at CUHK were found to have triggered by several incidents listed in the table above. It is also worth noting that in fact a number of students actually did not know much about these incidents and were not aware of these incidents. In a group interview, a participant shared in a group interview that everything people in Mainland China read is official and it is not easy to access to information or news as censorship is strict in Mainland China.

> *Dave: I only know very little about politics in Hong Kong. I don't know why people protested. I didn't know what was going on because in China our news about Hong Kong is very limited. We only have access to official news. I only knew that some professors at CUHK and HKU as well as localists and activists took aggressive approach to request for universal suffrage.*

What is more, two respondents felt that discrimination and bias towards mainlanders could possibly be influenced by the media and news appeared on social media:

Kyle: *I get along with most people I encountered at CUHK. But on the internet, it's another story. On the internet (discussion forums), I see discussants holding grudges against mainlanders, partly because of their political opinion and stance. The media is also quite influential as they tend to report negative things about mainlanders which create a negative image among mainlanders.*

Sandy: *In China we don't have access to Facebook as it's blocked. But in Hong Kong, I can read different sources of news reporting. A lot of bloggers or KOLs (Key Opinion Leader) like to speak ill of mainlanders. I also pay a lot of attention to CUHK and those comments written about mainland students are critical and mean. They (local students) don't like us (mainland students).*

Media such as newspaper, discussion forums/platforms on the Internet, broadcast, etc. holds incredible power to deliver information to the world. In particular, Internet has become a form of communication in the last two decades. With vast amount of information available on the Internet, it has been a trend that the public becomes more interested in stories that elicit schadenfreude, taking pleasure in the misfortune of others (Stapleton, 2016). For such reason, media tends to report on what attracts the public. Between 2013 and 2014, several videos about mainland mothers letting their child defecate in public area in Hong Kong went viral creating a media sensation. Outcry at these misbehaved mainland mothers sparked anger and criticism towards mainlanders. Since then, reports about mainlanders' misbehavior in the public often hit headlines of local newspaper, further reinforcing a negative image of mainlanders. Media does not report incidents which have taken place in Hong Kong but all around the world. In 2013, a photo of mainlander child defecating on a piece of paper placed on the ground at the airport in Taiwan hit the headline of several local newspaper in Hong Kong. In 2014, videos and photographs of Mainland Chinese tourists washing their feet in the famous Trevi Fountain in Rome were widely reported in local newspaper, media and social media. In 2015, angry Thai model posted a video on social media platforms, Facebook and Youtube, ranting against Mainland Chinese tourists jumping the queue at Jeju International Airport in South Korea. She further accused Mainland Chinese tourists for stepping on her feet and pushing their way to get to the front line. She also blamed these Mainland Chinese tourists for dirty airport toilets (Ni & Chan, 2015). The video went viral in Thailand as well as Hong Kong. The video had more than two million hits shortly after being uploaded. This video was also being uploaded to Youku, a similar version of YouTube platform in China, attracted more than 3000 comments (Ni & Chan, 2015). In 2016, an article published on the ASEAN Travel website pointed out that Asian and South East Asian countries were getting increasingly

annoyed and irritated by the repeated unacceptable behavior of Mainland Chinese tourists. The article mentioned that a number of citizens in Southeast Asia have developed hostile feelings toward China and pointed out that welcoming "quantity over quality" could kill tourism in long run (Citrinot, 2016). In 2017, a pair of Mainland Chinese parents excitedly filed their children tearing apart an artwork at the Shanghai Museum of Glass and later that year, a reckless Mainland Chinese child destroyed a Zootopia character built by numerous Lego pieces (Tan, 2017). In 2018, a group of Mainland Chinese tourists were found feasting on instant noodles at foot of Venice statue in Italy. To make matter worse, the group of tourists was found washing Tupperware and chopsticks in the public drinking fountain with natural spring water (Shanghalist, 2018). All these media reportings are prevailing agitation among people not only in Hong Kong but in different places around the world which in turns manifests itself into a negative stereotype, especially when it relates to public and social behavior. So whenever a mainland misbehaves in public, be it in Hong Kong or other parts of the world, the negative image is reinforced by the power of media.

As mentioned earlier, a series of political turmoil took place after the initial round of individual and focus group interview. Incidents like emergency of new 'localist' parties taking extremely measures to fight against the Hong Kong government and blaming the Chinese government, gradual signs of 'mainlandisation', curtailing academic freedoms, increasing the number of one way permits to help combat an aging population in Hong Kong and the most recent conflict in language policy took place only after the initial round of data collection. Although most mainland Chinese students come to Hong Kong for a specific purpose 'to study', their life is not only restricted within CUHK. In fact, they are exposed to local social context. Therefore, it is important to examine further the impact brought by various political turmoil after the initial round of data collection. Thus, an extended interview aimed to get a deeper understand was arranged to achieve a rich and contextualized picture of respondents' experiential account after witnessing an entire year with different political incidents during their adaptation period.

5.9 Conclusion of the chapter

This chapter reported important findings in the adaptation experiences, issues, challenges, and difficulties interviewed participants faced. Looking ahead, participants also had fears, worries and anxieties in the years ahead. In the aspect of linguistic experiences, interviewed participants had similar worries, fears and anxieties were similar to the above themes, academic and language. First,

grade point average (GPA) continued to be one of the major worries. As getting into the major they desired, internship, and overseas exchange programs depend on their grades in the first two years of study, they feared future opportunities will be affected because of the GPA. This major worry is directly related to language, English, again similar to the findings in the linguistic experiences they faced. Most respondents worried about their English would not excel or improve, which would affect their academic performance. In particular, one of the worries which was found to be mentioned repeatedly was their spoken English. These respondents were worried about the unimproved spoken English would eventually affect their ability to perform well in interviews and presentations, and communicating with foreigners. This would again affect different perspectives in the later stage of their study. Written English skill was also found to be a worry that many Mainland Chinese students had. This is perhaps aligned with their English learning in secondary school when using English to write was very limited. If their English remained status quo or does not progress or improve further, they would lose different opportunities they project to be happening in Year 3 and 4 of their study. While English seems to be a major linguistic concern among respondents, Cantonese became not such a major linguistic concern after all. It could be because most of the Mainland Chinese students do not intend to stay in Hong Kong after they graduate; therefore, whether they excel or improve in Cantonese does not matter as much as their improvement in English. The interviews had collected a number of linguistic and socio-cultural experiences interviewed participants faced and how they deal or manage the experiences they faced will be reported in Chapter 7.

Chapter 6
Changes in Different Stages of Data Collection

6.1 Introduction

Data was collected in five different stages over a one-year period. Therefore, differences and changes were found at different stages. It is important to identify the differences to see how adaptation experiences were changed in different stages. This chapter reports the changes in the five stages of data collection in participants' linguistic and socio-cultural experiences. Changes were noticeable in different stages of adaptation experiences in linguistics and socio-cultural aspects. The findings discovered would be helpful for higher institutions and educators like myself to rethink about whether appropriate and sufficient assistance have been provided for Mainland Chinese students and how to rectify the shortcomings in the existing policies and programmes.

This chapter reported the differences in the different stages during the one-year data collection. These changes showed that at different stages, the adaptation experiences did see some changes. For example, in the Stage 1 and 2, participants faced more experiences or challenges in linguistic experiences. That is reasonable because they have just arrived at CUHK and Hong Kong for roughly about 2 to 4 months and language barrier is the major experience they were trying to adapt to. Gradually in Stage 3 and 4, adaptation experiences appeared to be more related so socio-cultural. Since the group had spent over six months at CUHK and Hong Kong, their experiences had grown into different aspects and areas. The differences identified would be helpful for higher institutions to provide appropriate and sufficient assistance to Mainland Chinese students in the future. The focus could be placed more in the linguistic aspect and gradually extend to socio-cultural aspect. The extended interview carried out in Stage 5 attempted to study deeper of selected participants' experience in the most recent political turmoil at the time, 'pro-independence banner incident at CUHK.' Findings provided a richer and a more contextualized picture of participants' experiential account after an entire year with different political turmoil have taken place. While no significant changes were seen in linguistic experiences, it was found that Mainland Chinese students were reluctant to discuss politics with local students but would initiate the discussion with their friends of family in China due to the similarity background and brought up. With a large amount of data about linguistic and socio-cultural adaptation experiences had been reported and discussed in Chapter 5 and 6, how they dealt with or managed will be reported in Chapter 7.

6.2 Changes in Stages of Data Collection

Data was collected in five different stages over the one year period. Findings showed no significant differences in the stages in the aspect of linguistic adaptation experiences but there is a gradual change socio-cultural adaptation experiences reported by respondents. Findings showed gradual changes in the stages of data collection in the aspect of socio-cultural experiences. It was found that respondents tended to discuss more about issues with friendship in the first two stages. More socio-cultural experiences about culture and loneliness began showing up in Stage 2 and later stages. In later stages, more social-cultural experiences about discrimination, identity and politics were reported by surveyed and interviewed respondents. This could happen for several reasons which would be discussed in the following section.

The changes are discussed below in stages in the following sections.

6.3 Stage 1

6.3.1 Linguistic Experience

In the first stage (October 2016) when interviews and questionnaires were conducted, respondents merely reported linguistic experiences they encountered and faced - Cantonese and English. Respondents in interviews and questionnaires frequently mentioned "*Cantonese is difficult*", "*Cantonese is a challenge for me*", "*Cantonese and English are difficult and managing both are hard*", "*I cannot understand the concepts taught by the professors in English*", "*I faced a lot of difficulties because all courses are taught in English*", "*I am weak in spoken English*", "*I can't talk freely in Cantonese and I have to rely on Cantonese translators*", "*I can't understand both English and Cantonese well because professors and classmates both speak too fast*", and "*Cantonese creates a gap and barrier between local and mainland students. When I was in the college Orientation Camp, I wasn't able to take part in activities and discussions most of the time.*"

Since respondents had arrived only two to three months at CUHK, their experiences seemed more related to being unable to communicate with local students. During the first few months, mainland Chinese students had just arrived in Hong Kong, a completely new environment and they have so much to adapt to. First and foremost, getting along with local students is on top of their list. Yet the difficulties encountered in courses and lessons because English is the medium of instruction in

most courses come second. Therefore, Cantonese is the most mentioned linguistic experiences faced in this stage, followed by English.

6.3.2 Socio-cultural Experience

In the first stage (October 2016) when interviews and questionnaires were conducted, respondents merely reported 'friendship' as the socio-cultural experiences they encountered and faced. Similar comments about the difficulty to develop and maintain friendship such as "*I find difficulties communicating with local students because of language and cultural differences which made it difficult to develop friendship with local students*" were typically shared among respondents in focus group and individual interviews. Since respondents had arrived only two to three months at CUHK, they were still trying to get used to the new language and living environment. Since many mainland Chinese students came to CUHK without having any friends, the orientation camps and activities organized by the university and college would as a channel for them to meet new friends. Therefore, it is common that respondents reported merely on the socio-cultural adaptation experience in making friends. Having said that, one reported commented about conflicts between local and mainland Chinese student was mentioned which took place during an orientation camp organized by the university. The respondent reported someone calling him names but since he was not familiar with Cantonese, he did not know what that student was talking about. Later when his friend explained what happened, he then felt angry and sad for what had happened. It is also worth noting that most experiences related to friendship or making friends reported by respondents were caused by language barrier, communication gap and cultural differences. This means socio-cultural experiences and linguistic experiences interrelated with each other.

6.4 Stage 2

6.4.1 Linguistic Experience

In Stage 2, which was a month or so after the first stage (November 2016), respondents tended to experience and encountered more difficulties and challenges in English and Cantonese when compared to Stage 1, for instance, "*I find it very difficult to express myself in Cantonese and English*". The major difference noted in this stage is that more respondents tended to share their difficulties in English as a language barrier compared to Cantonese in Stage 1. In the first stage, respondents mentioned most about their language barrier in Cantonese, causing some difficulties

in getting along and meeting friends at CUHK. However, in the second stage, a shift is witnessed in language barrier from Cantonese to English. More respondents discussed their difficulties and challenges in the use of English. Typical comments included "*I find that my English is insufficient to communicate with local students and professors*", "*My English pronunciation is very weak*", "*My spoken English seriously needs improvement*". In addition, a new experience, academic pressure, was first found in the second stage of interviews. Respondents began to share more about their experiences in academic studies such as "*I often don't know how to express myself in academic discussions. All these discussions are in English which make it so challenging and difficult for me*", "*Sometimes I cannot express exactly what I want to say in English. In the past, I seldom attended interviews in English. So using English to answer questions in class and doing my homework is hard which increased some level of pressure in my study*", "*I once did a debate in one of my courses and I found it a bit difficult to express myself in English under some degree of pressure*". The experiences were closely related to the English, thus causing academic pressure. This could be a result that in the first stage (second month of the first term of the academic year) most respondents faced experiences more related to language in particular Cantonese because it was still the beginning of the term and these respondents had merely experience two months at CUHK. However, at this stage, these students would have begun immersing themselves into their university study, in particular November is a busy month for midterm and various assignments. Thus, they began to experience and encounter more than just using Cantonese at CUHK. Having said that, Cantonese was still a linguistic experience they faced in their first year of study at CUHK. They still were trying to adapt to this new environment.

6.4.2 Socio-cultural Experience

In this stage, respondents tended to have experienced and encountered in Hong Kong where more issues began appearing. Friendship was still being mentioned a lot in this stage. Typical comments included "*I did not make any local friends*", "*My classmates don't really like me*", "*Some Hong Kong students are biased towards mainland students*", etc. In this stage, the experience "friendship" respondents faced was not only unable to make friends. They began to explore and find out reasons to why they could not befriend with local students. Many respondents began relating to reasons like "*Hong Kong people hold discrimination over mainlanders*", "*A lot of Hong Kong people don't like mainlanders for what have been widely broadcast in the news*", and "*I heard local students saying bad things about us, those who come from China*". It was observed in

focus group meetings that some respondents began talking about they made some friends who were nice and helpful but they, at the same time, discussed the difficulties in developing a friendship with them because of discrimination and biases. Examples included *"I generally have no problem making friends", "I have met many local friends but we only talk about school related matters, nothing personal. So I am not sure if we can be called friends", "On the outside it seems that local students are really friend, but behind our back they will say ill things about us"* which implied that even though respondents were able to make friends, but they often feel the friendship is superficial because they believe local students hold grudges towards them. In reality, the two groups merely communicate and interact with each other in academic related activities. They seldom have opportunities to get together outside of school, which makes developing a friendship and clearing misunderstanding difficult and tough.

Besides friendship and discrimination, cultural differences were frequently mentioned. A social scientist said in a media interview that mainlanders in general are more respectful to authority as they are used to living under and following an authoritarian regime. Hongkongers, on the other hand, are more individualistic and care about personal rights (Ye, 2016) because of Hong Kong's colonial history and unique historic background. Some cultural differences mentioned by respondents included "*I know that mainlanders tend to speak very loudly in the public but that is because it is allowed to do so in mainland", "I also didn't realize we cannot eat or drink on MTR trains and buses", "I think Hong Kong is more westernized than mainland and Hong Kong follows many foreign etiquettes like they use spoons and forks to eat rice", etc.* These cultural differences do in fact generates conflicts and tensions between the two groups because they have been living, receiving education and growing up in two very different places, under two very different systems. Therefore, it is uncommon that after living in Hong Kong, particularly at CUHK, for three months, respondents began to witness cultural differences which have impact on making friends or developing friendship. It is also these cultural differences which create conflicts between the two groups.

6.5 Stage 3

6.5.1 Linguistic Experience

Stage 3 took place in February 2017, the second term of the academic year. In this stage, it was more obvious that respondents tended to share more about their linguistic experiences in English. Compared to the last two stages, these respondents had already completed the first term at CUHK which is roughly about six months since their initial arrival at CUHK. They began to share more in linguistic experiences such as having difficulty in using English to write a 1000-word essay or assignment. Many respondents in fact shared they felt their English level was not on par when compared to local students. Typical comments related to their English proficiency included "*Writing over 1000 words in assignments in many courses is hard. It is very pressurizing*", "*I faced so many problems like failing to express ideas in English, pronouncing English words incorrectly, hence felt embarrassed. It was also my first time writing English essays. It was very challenging and it was stressful*", "*I still have some difficulty in expressing myself in English, especially during the networking session. I could not express myself clearly so I could not communicate with the business professionals effectively*", "*It takes a long time to memorize the vocabulary in English. I spent a lot of time checking the meaning of the words. When I wrote essays, I even had to use Google translator because my teacher also could not understand what I was writing*", "*I was worried about my written assignments because I got very low grades. Comments from most teachers included need to improve in my English, grammar, sentence structure, use of vocabulary, etc.*", "*Many teachers use English in their class and I cannot understand what they are saying.*" It is clear that respondents often had trouble putting ideas together in English and had to resort to the help from Google Translate or some online websites to help them. In short, linguistic experiences in English led to academic pressure among mainland Chinese students.

6.5.2 Socio-cultural Experience

Having completed a full semester at CUHK, respondents began experiencing more issues outside of linguistic adaptation. Therefore, more` socio-cultural adaptation experiences appeared in the sharing among respondents in stage 3. While friendship, discrimination and cultural differences remained to be the top three socio-cultural experiences respondents faced, identity and politics emerged from interviews. In the socio-cultural experiences of friendship, discrimination and

cultural differences, findings were quite similar. Typical comments about the difficulty of meeting friends, being discriminated by local students, and cultural differences affecting adaptation and adjustment were very similar to those reported in stage 2. However, it could be seen that when respondents discussed about their experiences related to meeting friends/friendship, they would relate these experiences with cultural differences, identity and political matters.

In the past two stages, when respondents reported experiences about making friends or friendships, they were more related to linguistic and cultural differences. At this stage, however, when respondents reported experiences about making friends or friendships, they would discuss and relate more to identity and politics. For example, some respondents were curious about why local students would call themselves 'Hongkongers' instead of 'Chinese'. This could be explained by the factor that a series of political issues which took place between 2012 to 2015 had contributed to the worsening identity in the younger generation of Hong Kong youth. Shortly after the 'Umbrella Movement', a pro-democracy occupy protest in 2014, the sense of identity being 'Chinese' had found to be dramatically weakened in particular the group between 18 to 29 years old. A survey conducted by The University of Hong Kong's Public Opinion Programme in 2018 found that while more middle age groups were found to be proud of their identity as Chinese citizens, younger generation do not share the sentiment (HKU, 2018). The programme has been tracking the identity among Hong Kong people since the handover of sovereignty to Chinese rule in 1997. Results have found over the years the degree to which whether Hong Kong people are proud of their identity has fluctuated in particular between 2008 and 2016. Two decades after the handover in 1997, the trajectory has gone downward. The survey further found that the number of people identifying themselves as 'Chinese' had decreased while the number of people identifying themselves as 'Hongkonger' had increased (HKU, 2018). Thus, the clashing view on 'identity' inflicted conflicts between the two groups of students with the same ethnical background.

As seen in the timeline, a series of political issues have taken place in between 2012 to 2015. Having arrived at CUHK shortly a year after these political issues and turmoil, these respondents would begin feeling the tension caused by previous incidents (though they did not physically witness these incidents). For example, several respondents in focus group interviews mentioned words and phrases like "political activities", 'politics', 'Hong Kong versus China', 'Umbrella Revolution', and 'political opinion and stance'. Moreover, having studying and living in Hong

Kong for over half a year, this group of students would have come across news and media reporting on various political incidents which took place during this period of time. As mentioned by one respondent, news in Mainland China is one-way, censored and controlled. Citizens in Mainland China only read news published by the government. In Hong Kong, news from different groups, channels and views are made available. This could also be a reason to why more respondents began reporting adaptation experiences related to politics.

6.6 Stage 4

6.6.1 Linguistic Experience

The last round of data collection was done in April 2017. At this stage, respondents would have already arrived in Hong Kong and CUHK for over 8 to 9 months. They were assumed to have settled and got more used to the environment at CUHK. Still, the similar three linguistic experiences, English, Cantonese and Academic pressure caused by English proficiency were found in all four stages. For example, respondents constantly mentioned, "*My English really needs improvement*", "*Some difficulties in the use of Cantonese when communicating with my hostel tutors and course tutors. Some did not use English but Cantonese. Even when I spoke to them in Putonghua, they use some English and Cantonese*", "*I couldn't get along with my groupmates. Some were freeriders. They gave me the most difficult parts but since my English was poor, I made a lot of mistakes. When teachers returned the assignment saying that we need to proofread the writing and improve on language, I seemed to be blamed for producing poor work. I was so depressed*", "*I never thought I would get a C in English. I got very high score in my Gaokao*", and "*I need to find a way to improve my English*". Academic pressure, similar to stage two, is directly related and cause by the proficiency in particular English. General comments included "A three-hour examination having to write over 800 words was so stressful. I couldn't sleep the night before. I was so worried because in the first term, my GPA was very low", "I didn't get the grade as I expected", and "I am worried that my GPA will be affected by English especially in Year 2 when I have to take more major courses. If my GPA is low, it will affect my ability to get a good internship opportunity."

6.6.2 Socio-cultural Experience

The last round of data collection was done in April 2017. At this stage, respondents would have already arrived in Hong Kong and CUHK for over 8 to 9 months. They were assumed to have settled and got more used to the environment at CUHK. Even so, similar socio-cultural experiences reported were similar to the previous three stages but focused heavily on identity and politics. This could be well affected by the incident of "Racial abuse of Hong Kong football team" (see Table 4.1 for details about this incident) which took place before this round of data collection. After the incident, media reported excessively for the next few weeks. Commentaries appeared on different newspaper and social media. This is likely to have effect on respondents. Having said that, none of the respondents mentioned about this incident in focus group meetings and individual interviews. Those who reported negative feelings and adaptation issues about politics discussed "conflicts between local and mainland students", "media reporting negative things about mainland", and "differences between Hong Kong and China" but not pinpointing on particular incidents. However, in this round of data collection, more respondents tended to blame the media holds influential view on issues related to China. Typical comments included "the media tended to exaggerate bad things that happened in mainland", 'the media likes to smear cast on mainlanders", "newspaper headlines often report on mainland tourists negatively". In some sharing, respondents also mentioned about written attacks on mainland Chinese students and mainlanders appearing on social media platform such as "a lot of bloggers or KOLs like to speak ill of mainlanders", "many wrote mean comments on CUHK Secrets and Facebook", and "some people wrote critical and mean comments about mainland students". While adapting to the environment in Hong Kong and CUHK, mainland Chinese students would do things that they did not do when they were living in China. For example, they would now have access to various social media and newspaper which they could not access in Mainland China. In particular, Facebook which is inaccessible in China is one of the most frequently visited social media platforms among Hong Kong students. "CUHK Secrets", mentioned by one of the respondents, is a page on Facebook which receives anonymous posts and sharing from anyone generally students at CUHK (see Appendix 17). Although the page is private and those who want to read posts must gain approval from the administrator of the page, who is also the creator of the page. Those who want to have their posts appeared on CUHK Secrets need to send the postings to the administrator for verification. Posts will appear on the page after being scrutinized by the administrator. In the

period between 2014 and 2016, a number of posts appeared attacking mainland students. Some respondents also mentioned at the stage of the interviews that they read posts attacking mainland students. For example, "Some students called us mainland students 'nds' (acronym of nei di sheng) which means students from Mainland China", "I read a really mean post which was obviously written by a local student, saying that we mainlanders should go back to mainland as we come to Hong Kong to steal resources and take away hostel places", "Perhaps these posts are anonymous, local students were very mean and critical about us", "Many students appeared to be friendly on the surface, but on the Internet they become hostile towards mainland students". Tension caused by political incidents and stance tended to more serious and intensive at this stage. Media and social media also play a role in deepening the tension between local and mainland students.

6.7 Stage 5 – Extended Interview

6.7.1 Background

In November and December 2017, an invitation email (see Appendix 18) was sent to 10 respondents who had taken part in individual interview and focus interview for an extended interview to achieve a rich and contextualized picture of respondents' experiential account after an entire year with different political turmoil have taken place. Only 4 respondents replied and agreed to take part in the extended interview. The extended interview was an individual interview with the hope to get a deeper understanding through one-on-one discussion (see Appendix 19). It was observed in previous focus-group meetings that some respondents were rather reserved when it came to discussing personal feelings. Therefore, a one-on-one interview would allow respondents to share their feelings openly and without reservation.

The extended interview attempted to study deeper of selected respondents' experience in the most recent political turmoil, 'pro-independence banner incident at CUHK.' In early September 2017, a series of banners and posters with messages advocating "Hong Kong Independence", independence from Chinese ruling, began appearing across universities and academic institutions in Hong Kong. It was believed that these banners and posters were put up by student activists. The banners and posters were removed which led to students and student union from different universities in Hong Kong condemning the act as "suppression of freedom of speech". Authorities from universities and academic institutions attempted to ban students from putting up banners

which advocated separatism led to a standoff and debate about freedom of speech. The act had also reignited debate about "Hong Kong Independence" within Hong Kong society. Former CUHK Vice Chancellor, Professor Joseph Sung, demanded any materials advocating Hong Kong independence to be removed; otherwise, campus officials from would tear down and remove the banners and posters without further notice. He also reiterated that CUHK is against the notion of Hong Kong independence. In addition, he reemphasized that though freedom of speech is the cornerstone of CUHK, it must not violate the law as the Basic Law clearly stipulated that Hong Kong is an inalienable part of China. He added that he wished not the university would turn into a place for different political groups to advocate their propaganda. He hoped the university would remain a peaceful place for academic exchange and pursuit of knowledge (Chiu, 2018).

On September 8, 2017, a video went viral on the Internet. The video showed a mainland Chinese student attempting to tear down a "pro-democracy" poster on the "democracy wall" at CUHK and was then confronted by student union members of CUHK on September 5, 2017. In the next few days, the video had attracted vast attention and the mainland student was condemned and verbally abused online in Hong Kong, but received praises in media in Mainland China (Lai, 2018; Chung & Cheung, 2017). Media around the world (e.g. Canada, USA, Australia) broadly reported the incidents (Lee, 2017; Gao, 2017; McCandless, 2017; Bland, 2017; Cook, 2017; Zhao, 2017). The incident also manifested a series of public protests and reignited and intensified the already strained "Mainland-Hong Kong Conflict". Moreover, the incident has reflected issues regarding cyberbully and stereotype towards mainland Chinese students.

6.7.2 Linguistic Experience

In the individual interviews with these 4 respondents, the first question asked was "*You will remember that I am interested in learning about your experience at CUHK. It is now over a year since you started, and a lot has happened during that time. How do you feel about things now?*" All four respondents gave similar answer that they felt quite the same. None of the four respondents provided any detailed information about how they felt about things at the moment. The question followed by asking respondents whether their initial view of CUHK changed after the last interview. This question aimed to see if students would bring up incidents about the current political turmoil or other unexpected experiences that they would have experienced. Similar to the previous questions, all respondents shared their feeling was somewhat the same, not major changes

or differences. Throughout the interviews with these students, not one of them mentioned anything about their linguistic experiences.

6.7.3 Socio-cultural Experience

As expected, respondents tended to share more about their socio-cultural experiences. However, when asking whether respondents' initial view had changed after our last interview in about 6 to 9 months ago, all 4 respondents said not much had changed. Even in the question asking how respondents felt after a year since they have arrived in Hong Kong, all 4 respondents said they felt somewhat the same and nothing much has changed. None of the respondents brought up the any political issues and turmoil.

However, when the question asked about whether respondents the pro-independence posters on 'democracy wall', respondents became a bit more active in their sharing. All respondents shared that they noticed the posters and read the content of these posters but these posters did not affect them emotionally at all. Having that said, these respondents felt the incident had somewhat affected their identity and impression on local students.

> *Aaron: It's one thing about not liking Mainland but it's quite immature to want to be independent. Hong Kong is a part of Mainland and that is the fact. You can express your views rationally but not using banners and posters as propagandas to defame Beijing and China is rather immature.*
>
> *Sonia: It didn't affect me too much but I felt that my identity is affected a little bit. Like I am also from Mainland China, so I am a Chinese but many local students here do not consider themselves Chinese. I am a bit affected by this.*

Similar to findings in socio-cultural experiences, identity was one of the adaptation experiences many mainland Chinese students faced in Hong Kong. Most mainland Chinese students could not comprehend why local students insisted on calling themselves "Hongkongers" but not Chinese. This, again as mentioned when discussion the adaptation experience 'identity', is caused by the continuous conflicts between Hong Kong and Mainland China. The incidents have further divided the two groups and inflicted "unnecessary and avoidable" conflicts. The shift in how local people, especially the younger generation, felt about their ethnicity has drastically and significantly changed in the last decade. Two decades ago, especially at the time when Beijing won bids to hold the 2008 Olympic Games, many local people felt proud as being Chinese. If you asked them at the time about their ethnicity, they would be proud to say they are Chinese. There was no stigma

of claiming themselves as Chinese. However, when a series of scandals appeared in China had put change local people's view on China as well as their identity. Today, when you ask local students their ethnicity, some would still say they are Chinese, but not as many as two decades ago. The term "Hongkonger" emerged in a decade after the handover spreads out beyond politics and nationality, and crosses into aspects of culture, ethnicity, race and morality (Blundy, 2016).

When asked whether respondents had attended meetings organized by Mainland Student Committee/Association or other mainland student organization/association, all respondents said they did not. In fact, most were not aware whether there were any meetings for this issue and did not want to be involved in political affairs. A respondent added that, "*I believe the campus should be for studying, not political things. I also tried not to discuss with schoolmates and classmates about political things because me, myself is not interested in politics. But the President of the Mainland Student Association sent us an email telling us (mainland students) not to be affected by this incident. We should just study and enjoy life at CUHK and do not involve in politics".* This implies that most mainland Chinese students do not want to be involved in politics and they try to avoid discussing political incidents or views with local students just to avoid conflicts. However, all participants did have casual or informal discussions or chats with their friends back home in China as they believed they have similar background and political views and stances.

Sonia: *No, I never discussed political things with local students. We are from two different background and culture. They tend to be very radical when it comes to the Chinese government. I only discussed with my friends and family in back in China but they tend to me more rational and fair-minded in political matters. We also share same and similar view because we have similar background.*

Jessica: *I didn't talk to any friends and classmates in Hong Kong. I don't want to discuss political affairs with people in Hong Kong. I feel that we have different view and background. Our stance is very extreme. I don't want to raise a political debate. My family and friends in China said students should focus on study rather than political issues.*

Aaron: *I didn't talk to any friends in Hong Kong. I don't discuss political matters with friends in Hong Kong. But I did talk to my good friend in Beijing…because I can tell him my honest feelings and he will not get angry or upset.*

Evidently, participants would avoid discussing politics with local students due to the huge differences in background and the way they were educated and nurtured in two different places.

Another two participants further discussed "pro-independence" which was something unacceptable or has any groups for discussion. This reflects to the most current situation in Hong Kong where a primary school teacher was deregistered for talking about and using materials related to "pro-independence" to teach students about the concepts of freedom of speech and independence (Davidson, 2020). Similarly, two participants discussed the inappropriacy of discussing the issue "pro-independence".

Peter: *I discussed with my close friends back in China. I also posted my view about the incidents (pro-independence and mainland student tearing down the poster) on Weibo (a social medial platform similar to Facebook in China) and discussed with my close friends back in China. We don't agree with the pro-independence issue. They also believe campus should be a place for study, not for political propaganda.*

Aaron: *I feel that my Hong Kong friends are quite sensitive in this pro-independence issue. Actually, I don't think pro-democracy is right and that is my view. I am only willing to tell my good friend in Beijing and dare not tell anyone in Hong Kong. I know if I say this to local students, they will get angry at me. Hong Kong is a part of China and this is a fact. Some people in Hong Kong do not want to believe but this is the truth.*

It is not very surprising that mainland Chinese students do not initiate discussion in the topics on politics. In fact, from the sharing above, it could be seen that mainland Chinese students come to Hong Kong for the sole purpose of studying, but not taking part in politics. They also try their very best to avoid conflicts with local students. They would only discuss topics associated with politics with their friends, peers and family in Mainland China, with whom have similar cultural background, political views and stances. It also appeared that respondents are generally fair and unbiased. When asked what they thought about the mainland student who tore down the posters, one respondent shared:

Peter: *I think that mainland student is wrong for tearing down the posters because the democracy wall is for students to express their feelings. But, on the other hand, I also think students should not put those posters (about pro-independence) on the democracy wall. Campus is not a place for political propagandas.*

Other respondents generally had no strong feeling towards the incident. Most respondents' main intention of coming to Hong Kong is to study or to improve their English proficiency as mentioned in Chapter 4. Therefore, these students had no intention of taking away resources, competing with Hong Kong students for opportunities nor involving in political affairs. A respondent (Aaron)

added, "*I don't have much knowledge in politics. I try my best not to discuss politics with local friends but I discuss with my parents because it seems that adults are more mature to analyze evaluate political matters. My parents often reminded me to just focus on my study and don't take try to step into others' matters. I didn't know why many local students always say mainland students take away resources and opportunities. But having been here (Hong Kong) for a year, I started to understand why. Mainland students all have places for hostels while some local students who live far away were not offered hostel places. Also, many mainland students study very hard and receive prizes, awards and scholarships. All these tended to build up hatred towards mainland students".*

The two groups with the same ethnic status but often have clashes and conflicts mainly because the two groups rarely communicated. This could be also found in the sharing when asking the four respondents whether they made any local friends during the year. All of them said they made friends mostly with mainland students, not local students. Reasons included "*the faculty which I am studying in have a lot of mainland students*", "*I don't want to be involved in conflicts and clashes*", "*I made some local friends but we are not very close. My closest friends are mostly from mainland."* This implies that the lack of communication between the two groups often cause clashes and conflicts because of their differences in thinking, political views and stance, habits and culture.

In the question asking respondents how local students feel about them, in fact most respondents felt that local students do not hate them but just dislike them because they are from Mainland China and they were brought up and educated in an entirely different system. Their responses also implied that they did want to interact or get to know local students, yet they were reluctant to do so because they do not want to enrage them.

Sonia: *I think most Hong Kong students don't dislike mainland students, just some of them. They don't really dislike us but they sometimes show unfriendliness towards us. For example, they don't talk to us and call us names like "nerds, locusts, bookworms, big6, nds, etc."*

Peter: *I am not sure but I think some local students don't like us. They think we take away their resources and opportunities. They probably have some negative feelings about mainland students.*

Jessica: I think some dislike us because of some bad things mainlanders did in Hong Kong like talking loudly in the public, lacking social etiquette and buying a lot of luxurious and expensive goods. These left bad impression and images on mainlanders. Some local students are actually quite friendly to us and provide us a lot of help at the beginning.

Differences exist when different groups with different background and culture live and study in one place. It has been clear that the on-going clashes between the two groups of students are caused by various issues and politics is definitely one of them. Therefore, when controversies in political affairs arise, the peace between the two groups would be easily torn apart (Su, 2017).

Table 6.1: Summary of Linguistic Experiences in the 5 stages

		Linguistic Experiences
Stage 1 (October 2016)	Cantonese English	• *Can't communicate with local students* • *Can't understand professors and lecture, have difficulty in writing assignments in English*
Stage 2 (November – early December 2016)	English Cantonese Academic Pressure	• *Writing, listening, grammar and vocabulary* • *Can't communicate with tutors and roommates and during social activities* • *Directly caused by English*
Stage 3 (February 2017)	English Cantonese Academic Pressure	• *Can't understand professors and lecture, have difficulty in writing assignments (which are over 1000 words)* • *Using English in oral presentation in class* • *Difficulty communicating with local students in group project and discussion. They are not willing to use Putonghua.* • *GPA* • *Unable to get along with classmates in group work*
Stage 4 (April 2017)	English	• *Have difficulty in writing assignments* • *Using English in oral presentation in class*

	Cantonese Academic Pressure	• *English not progressing* • Have to spend a large amount of time looking up dictionary to find the meaning of words • *Communication gap with students and professors in the use of Cantonese* • *Grades, GPA,* • *Unable to get along with classmates in group work* • *Unable to get into their desirable major* • *cannot get exchange and internship opportunities* • *too many general education courses*
Stage 5 Extended Interview Dec 2017	/	/

Table 6.2: Summary of Socio-cultural Experiences in the 5 stages

	Linguistic Experiences	Socio-cultural
Stage 1 (October 2016)	Cantonese, English	Friendship
Stage 2 (November – early December 2016)	English, Cantonese, Academic Pressure due to English	Friendship, Culture, Discrimination
Stage 3 (February 2017)	English and Cantonese, Academic Pressure (English, GPA, Unable to get along with classmates in group work)	Friendship, Discrimination, Culture, Identity, Politics
Stage 4 (March 2017)	English, Cantonese, Academic Pressure (Grades, GPA, Unable to get along with classmates in group work, Unable to get into their desirable major, cannot get exchange and internship opportunities)	Loneliness, Discrimination, Politics

Stage 5 Extended Interview Dec 2017	Cantonese, English (English not progressing, spend too much time looking up dictionary to find the meaning of words), Academic Pressure (Low GPA, heavy workload, too many general education courses,)	Discrimination, Identity, Politics

6.8 Conclusion of the chapter

This chapter reported the differences in the different stages during the one-year data collection. These changes showed that at different stages, the adaptation experiences did see some changes. For example, in the Stage 1 and 2, participants faced more experiences or challenges in linguistic experiences. That is reasonable because they have just arrived at CUHK and Hong Kong for roughly about 2 to 4 months and language barrier is the major experience they were trying to adapt to. Gradually in Stage 3 and 4, adaptation experiences appeared to be more related so socio-cultural. Since the group had spent over six months at CUHK and Hong Kong, their experiences had grown into different aspects and areas. The differences identified would be helpful for higher institutions to provide appropriate and sufficient assistance to Mainland Chinese students in the future. The focus could be placed more in the linguistic aspect and gradually extend to socio-cultural aspect. The extended interview carried out in Stage 5 attempted to study deeper of selected participants' experience in the most recent political turmoil at the time, 'pro-independence banner incident at CUHK.' Findings provided a richer and a more contextualized picture of participants' experiential account after an entire year with different political turmoil have taken place. While no significant changes were seen in linguistic experiences, it was found that Mainland Chinese students were reluctant to discuss politics with local students but would initiate the discussion with their friends of family in China due to the similarity background and brought up. With a large amount of data about linguistic and socio-cultural adaptation experiences had been reported and discussed in Chapter 5 and 6, how they dealt with or managed will be reported in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7
Coping Strategies

7.1 Introduction

Drawing on the findings in linguistic and socio-cultural adaptation experiences, this chapter carries on to report and discuss on findings on the third research question, "*How do they deal with and manage the experiences they face in Hong Kong?*"

Moving from secondary to university is a big step and a brand new chapter to any student. Studying abroad is likely to have its challenges and evidently international students experience various adaptation issues that are likely to impact their study and overall experience. Having to emerge into a different culture, environment and country can be a challenge. University students deal with different academic and social challenges during their first year and these challenges could be bigger and more intensive for international students. As universities in Hong Kong have been striving to become more internationalized since the 1990s, the experiences that students encounter are likely to become more prominent. Previous research identified international students experienced challenges in academic, language proficiency, and culture (Sovic, 2008; Cheung (2013; Yu, 2013; Yu & Downing, 2012) while other research investigated and reported on adaptation experiences, issues and challenges, and adaptation and adjustment/change strategies (Kiley, 2003; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). The initial stage (e.g. first year of arrival) is commonly known as the most stressful period for sojourners, new immigrants, mobile students, or migrants because they experience multifaceted environment and personal changes in the host destination/culture (Chan, 1998). Researchers, educators and academics are increasingly concern over cross-border students' adaptation and adjustment because their experiences have vast impact on their remaining years of study or stay in the host destination/culture. From study participants' experiential narratives of ways, strategies and approaches they adopted in dealing with and managing their linguistic and socio-cultural experiences in Hong Kong since their arrival, the use of active approaches was revealed. In addition, some resorted to no coping strategies or found it unnecessary to deal with the experiences as they believed the situation would improve on its own or they would eventually adapt in the host destination. The findings discovered would be helpful for higher institutions and educators like myself to identify the different coping strategies adopted and how universities and educators could play a part in their acculturation process.

7.2 Data Analysis and Discussion

As discussed in Chapter 5, all recorded interviews were transcribed manually followed by manual coding during the transcription process. Transcribed data was then entered into NVivo. The double coding process would ensure important keywords or points were not missed during the manual coding process. After coding and analysis, seven themes were derived from the findings from all sources of data which including focus group interviews, individual interviews and extended individual interviews. The findings are discussed separately in themes in the following sections.

7.3 Theme 1: Taking Cantonese Lessons/Learning Cantonese

One of the most significant adaptation issues/experiences reported by respondents as mentioned in Chapter 4 was language barrier. The lack of Cantonese and English proficiency was the major linguistic challenge brought up by surveyed and interviewed respondents. When asked how respondents dealt with and managed the experiences they faced, similar responses reported by respondents included "*taking Cantonese courses*", "*improving my Cantonese*", or "*learning more Cantonese*" as a way to deal and manage language barrier.

When further asked in the focus group interviews why they thought improving their Cantonese proficiency would soothe their adaptation experiences, respondents shared:

June: *Learning Cantonese allows me to catch up with the conversation which was the problem I faced. I could not understand and catch up with what the others were saying.*

Vicky: *Not understanding Cantonese has made my first few months at CUHK rather difficult because most students and teachers spoke Cantonese and not understanding Cantonese made it difficult for me to mix in. Sometimes there would be times I can't express myself. I think improving my Cantonese will make my life at CUHK easier.*

Alan: *When I first arrived at CUHK, I didn't know any Cantonese. There were so many embarrassment, misunderstanding and misunderstanding. I cannot understand what my teachers say in class and cannot join activities organized by my faculty and college because mostly local students organized and participated in them. When I decided to learn Cantonese on my own, I improved in one month and now I faced fewer problems.*

Jessica: *When I joined a society, I wasn't able to compete for my preferred position because my Cantonese wasn't fluent. Therefore, learning Cantonese is more important than English.*

Yu and Zhang (2016) found in their study that Mainland Chinese students who lacked proficiency in Cantonese felt their adaptation experience uneasy and troublesome as they could not integrate into the local student community, hence had taken Cantonese courses offered by their university or student clubs after their arrival in Hong Kong. Similarly, many of the respondents in the study took an active approach to soothe their transitional experience by taking Cantonese classes as the lack of Cantonese impeded their integration and communication. Most of the respondents who took Cantonese classes did so at CUHK organized by the university or the colleges which they were associated with none mentioned taking Cantonese classes outside CUHK. Cantonese, a regional variety of Chinese, is the predominant dialect used on campus among local students to communicate in most social, political, cultural and political occasions (Benson & Nunan, 2005; Lee & Leung, 2012; Gao, 2010). Therefore, the insufficient knowledge in the Cantonese would affect mainland students' adaptation experience. As mentioned previously in Chapter 5, Cantonese serves as the lingua franca of the Pearl River Delta Metropolitan Region (the Guangdong province, Hong Kong and Macau), and it is also the official and dominant language of Hong Kong and Macau, the two special administrative regions of China. However, the Cantonese used in Mainland China and Hong Kong have various differences, including word choices, pronunciation and linguistic style (i.e. code-switching, slangs, idioms, etc.) (Cheng, 1998; Yu & Zhang, 2016).

According to the data collected in the questionnaire, which was distributed at the early stage of the data collection period, majority of the respondents' hometown was indeed not in the Guangdong region. It was also mentioned by interviewed respondents that even though they grew up and resided in the Guangdong region which is a Cantonese speaking region, most people used Putonghua, the lingua franca, the official and national language in China, to communicate. Additionally, respondents from the Guangdong region reported that the Cantonese they had heard in Hong Kong seemed largely different in terms of pronunciation, choices of words and speaking style. These differences in features of Cantonese are exactly as reported by Cheng (1998), Chan (2007) and Yu and Zhang (2016) in their study. Moreover, when studying in Mainland China, Cantonese was neither a subject nor second-language course students could take and study.

Respondents reported taking the autonomy to learn Cantonese through watching Hong Kong television shows, dramas, listening to radio broadcast, and sometimes through communicating with family, relatives and friends who travel back and forth to Hong Kong and Shenzhen for business.

An interesting point worth noting is that in terms of language barrier, although the lack of proficiency in both Cantonese and English was mentioned by many respondents, none of the respondents took any measures or approaches to deal with the issues they faced in the use of English whereas many respondents sought active ways and approaches to learn Cantonese. Many foreign students, especially Chinese learners see English as an important resource for self-empowerment (Gao, Cheng, Zhao, & Zhou, 2005; Gao, Zhao, Cheng & Zhou, 2007) so it was a surprise to discover respondents took more active approaches to improve their Cantonese rather than English. One underlying factor could be at the time of data collection, in particular Stage 1 and 2, these Mainland Chinese students had still not yet experienced completing assignments in English or taking assessments in English. Therefore, they focused heavily on improving their Cantonese instead of English. In fact, when chatting casually with Mainland students on campus, many thought that English is something they would gradually improve through studying at CUHK; however, equipping themselves with Cantonese is more urgent as the need to communicate with their peers and people in Hong Kong requires some basic ability to speak in Cantonese, if not proficiently, impacts their daily lives in the city and on campus. In Chapter 5, various linguistic and socio-cultural experiences faced by respondents were reported in stages but in terms of how respondents dealt with and managed the adaptation experiences they faced, it showed no significant differences. Having said that, those who reported taking Cantonese lessons in Stage 4 and 5 showed their adaptation experiences had improved vastly.

Ben: *I struggled in the first semester but I took a Cantonese course organized by my college and after 3 months of learning Cantonese I can understand Cantonese much better. It seems that there have been less conflicts and misunderstanding now.*

Bonnie: *I find that although my English is quite bad, it is sufficient for basic communication with local students and my professors. So, I chose to spare no effort to improve my English. Instead, I made a lot of effort to improve my Cantonese. I believe if I can speak Cantonese, my life at CUHK will be smoother. I believe to be able to survive at CUHK, I must know the local language well.*

In particular, one respondent showed a relatively similar but different view in why so much effort was put forward to improving Cantonese instead of English. In the focus group interview, she argued that although English seems relatively important, she thought improving Cantonese would make her adaptation experience easier at CUHK.

> *Tiger: I find that although my English is quite bad, it is sufficient for basic communication with local students and my professors. So, I chose to spare no effort to improve my English. Instead, I made a lot of effort to improve my Cantonese. I believe if I can speak Cantonese, my life at CUHK will be smoother. I believe to be able to survive at CUHK, I must know the local language well.*

Similarly, many international/foreign students who study in non-English speaking countries like Japan and Korea would first take active approach to learn L1 of that host country as they would find having sufficient knowledge in L1 of the host country would make communication and adaptation much easier and smoother. However, the major difference between Hong Kong and these other non-English speaking countries in the Asian region is the term "Chinese". As reported in Chapter 4, one of the major attractions of coming to CUHK to study is bilingual education offered by the university. There, the term "bilingual" meant Chinese and English. This misconception is led by the term "Chinese" which many respondents thought to be Putonghua instead of Cantonese. Therefore, upon arrival, respondents felt that they are being exposed to a brand new language environment. The "Chinese" is not as they imagine so in order to make their adaptation easier, Cantonese is the language, used to communicate daily in Hong Kong, is taken priority over Hong Kong. In fact, a number of respondents in different occasions mentioned that English does not seem to be a problem as reading and writing does not seem to be affecting causing communication breakdowns or barriers with teaching staff at CUHK because most teaching staff are very lenient in terms of expectation in English proficiency and teaching staff usually provide ample support and help when it comes to English. Therefore, most respondents took active approach to take Cantonese classes/learn Cantonese in the hope to mix in better with the students, thus adapt to this new university environment better. However, a few respondents mentioned in the focus group interview that the need to master both Cantonese and English at the same time in such short period time is very difficult, yet stressful and frustrating. In short, movement across Mainland China and Hong Kong has indexed the varying values attached to English, Cantonese and Putonghua, progressing into another social issue – identity (the Mainland Chinese identity and Hong Kong Chinese identity) (Gu & Tong, 2012).

7.4 Theme 2: Making friends only with students of similar background

Despite various studies repeatedly revealing Chinese students who study overseas are more prone to experience acute pressure and distress compared with other Asian students (Zhang & Rentz, 1994; Bourne, 1975; Klein, Miller & Alexander, 1981; Yang & Clum, 1994), ways sought to deal and manage the experiences tend to be camouflaged. This could well relate to the traditional teaching of Chinese parents. Chinese is a rather conservative culture due to the influence of Confucianism and Taoism. Parents start teaching their children at young age to be quiet, studious and lay low by not drawing attention to themselves (Yan, 2017). Furthermore, admitting to problems, be it academic or emotional, have long been seen as a shame and disgrace in a Chinese family or society (Chuang, 1988) as the concern of "losing face" (i.e. shame, embarrassment, humiliation, disgrace, etc.). Revealing any problems indeed is a personal weakness, the inability to resolve and be determined which would, again, reflect negatively to the family or society (Mau & Jepsen, 1990). The traditional thoughts and cultural factors are likely to be associated factors which prevent students from seeking external help, hence run away from problems. This could further explain why respondents in this study revealed one of the ways to deal and manage adaptation experiences is avoidance.

Ally: *It is difficult to find an immediate solution to the challenges I face in such short period of time. Therefore, avoid making friends with local students is the best solution. At least I don't have to deal with prejudice.*

Ken: *I try to make friends with those like me. They understand me and conflicts will not appear.*

Jon: *I think it's easier to befriend with students who come from China. We have similar background and understand our problems easier.*

Acculturation and adaptation issues arisen from studying abroad are unavoidable. Results from the beginning of data collection period, (Stage 1) October to December 2016, that was also the beginning of the new term, their initial arrival at CUHK, when all mainland Chinese students were invited via email to complete an online questionnaire (see Appendix 5) showed that 93.7% of respondents revealed they had met friends at CUHK, though the terms "friends" did not clearly reveal whether they were local students or not. Furthermore, only 36.5% of respondents revealed they had difficulties getting along with friends whom they met at CUHK since their arrival whereas 63.5% said they had no difficulties. The results seemed to have contradicted with the ways

respondents dealt and managed their experiences faced in Hong Kong. If only a small portion of students had difficulties getting along with friends whom they met at CUHK, the reason to why they would avoid speaking to local and international students remains enigmatic.

Therefore, in the focus group interviews, respondents were asked to further explain and elaborate if the new friends they had met in Hong Kong were local or non-local students. Most respondents revealed they had met new friends mostly from Mainland China as they felt more comfortably communicating with them through Putonghua. Because of that, they did not have difficulties or problems getting along with the new friends they had met. In particular, in the first two stages of focus group interviews, respondents felt more comfortable making friends with people from similar background. Upon clarification in focus group interviews, results began to echo findings in the online questionnaire when asked about their socio-cultural adaptation experiences. "Friendship" remained the top adaptation experiences respondents faced in the first three stages (October 2016 to February 2017). Respondents mentioned reasons which prevented them from making friends with local students lied on language barrier, limited topics to talk about, the different ways of thinking, prejudice and discrimination against China and mainlanders and cultural differences. A participant (Ivan) shared a unique experience vividly which could well explain why some respondents would avoid speaking to local students as a way to deal with and manage their experiences and/or challenges faced in Hong Kong.

> *Ivan: In one major course, I remember the professor asked us to form groups for a group project but I didn't know anyone so I asked a group of local students if I can join their group. They hesitated and didn't seem to welcome me. The professor came over and helped me and the group finally allowed me to join them. However, the three students seemed like they knew one another and communicated in Cantonese. When I joined the discussion in English, they continued using Cantonese to discuss. I tried my best to share ideas but because of my ignorance in Cantonese, I couldn't understand what they were talking about. During the course, they often made mean comments about mainlanders and would whisper something in Cantonese which I couldn't understand. This made me very sad and this was not a single case. I experienced something similar in other courses, too. I also heard others talking about similar situation. I don't want to fail the course, yet I can't integrate myself into the group. My group members said mainland students are very smart and hardworking so they gave me one section to work on. This, I felt, was an example of discriminating against mainland students. It could be the language barrier that prevented me to even become friends with them but it could also be that local students already hold hatred towards mainland students.*

As mentioned previously, when studying abroad, acculturation and adaptation experiences or issues are unavoidable and are likely to appear. With the lack of proficiency in both English and Chinese (Cantonese), Mainland Chinese students tend to take a passive approach in avoidance to speak to local students and make friends with students in similar background. The way language is learnt and how we use language to communicate differs. Wong (2004) reported that Chinese students often lack contextual knowledge or cultural background and language training, in particular English, in an authentic environment which hinder their adaptation because they cannot communicate with students in host destinations. Therefore, Chinese students very often choose to hang out with those from the same origins instead of host destinations. Findings of the study are a resonance to the experiences of interviewed respondents.

In addition, timing seemed to be a factor which contributed to respondents taking the approach to avoid speaking to local students. Since it was the first few months of the arrival of Mainland Chinese students, they were not facing only linguistic and socio-cultural but an entirely new studying and living environment, not to mention being away from their home country, parents, family and friends. Having to face all these adaptation experiences all at the same time could be overwhelming and challenging yet difficult. When talking about timing, it is also important to note that during the period of data collection, a series of conflicts and political turmoil had appeared between Hong Kong and China including the anti-mainlandization motion, the promotion of Mandarin in language policies as seen as downgrading the status of Cantonese, the pro-independence banner incident at CUHK, the aftermath of the "Umbrella Movement", etc. as previously mentioned in Chapter 5. The rise of tension between the two groups could well be a factor to explain why these Mainland Chinese students to socially isolate themselves and turn to their own community for support in order to minimize conflicts which was the 'hiding' or 'isolating' strategy supported by Wang (2017) and Jackson (2008).

What has repeatedly mentioned in both focus group interviews and individual interviews was that "*I prefer making friends with mainland students over local students".* The function of the Chinese student community is dichotomous. On one hand, the Mainland Chinese students withdraw from social activities and confine to only within their own community deliberately. It might not have been their initial intention, but perhaps after being in Hong Kong for a few months, this group of Mainland Chinese students began to feel the tension and conflicts appearing, so they took the

approach. On the other hand, the Chinese student community provides strong support, emotional and physical, to one another and strives to tackle and face challenges and issues together by exploring solutions together as a group. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Mainland Chinese students took the initiative to set up groups on social networks to support one another (Stapleton & Feng, 2015). Although none of the respondents mentioned anything related to this aspect in any individual interviews or focus group interviews, the strategy of using online social networks is seen in one of the tertiary institutions, Education University of Hong Kong (Stapleton & Feng, 2014). Mainland Chinese students would form an online digital community to help one another manage their adaptation. Surely, this strategy is likely to have appeared or have been using by Mainland Chinese students across tertiary institutions in Hong Kong but not mentioned in the interviews only. When browsing through Baidu and WeChat, the two popular social networking sites used by Mainland Chinese students, different discussion topics and threads are formed regularly across tertiary institutions in Hong Kong. Questions and answers are posted regularly as a way to help and support one another's adaptation in Hong Kong even when they are not studying in the same institution. Questions ranging from assignment to merely venting could be seen in these social networking sites.

7.5 Theme 3: Soliciting help from local friends

Empirical findings revealed that mainland Chinese students tended to turn to family support, parental support to be specific, when facing problems or troubles (Ye, 1992; Ni & Chan, 2005; Lin, 1998). Frank (2000) found in his study that family would be the first when Chinese students feel depressed or frustrated while Zhang pointed out (1992) close ties between Chinese parents and their children significantly contributed to academic success. Tradition Confucius valued greatly on harmonious relations (Wei & Li, 2013; Li, 2006) and Confucian family values have in many generations influenced Chinese education. That means, Chinese parents carry top parental responsibilities to provide quality education and guide and manage the behavior and lives of their children. Children, thus, honor the family and fulfill "filial piety" by succeeding in school (Hwang, 1999; Liu, Ng, Weatherall & Loong, 2010). Moreover, Chinese culture places great significance on emotional control (Kim, Atkinson & Yang, 1999; Kim, Li & Ng, 2005) and parents often educate their children starting at a very young age to handle any difficulties, including stress, problems, etc. on their own. Seeking help from professionals (i.e. professors, counselors, etc.) or adults (i.e. parents, relatives, etc.) is a symbol of weakness and implies personal failure to

managing themselves, resulting in shame and loss of face (i.e. embarrassment, humiliation, etc.). In addition, Chinese students are often reluctant to seek help from family members simply because they feel such act would create burden to them (Constantine, Kindaichi, Okazaki, Gainor & Baden, 2005; Heppner, et al., 2006). This can well explain the reason why in the process of data analysis including both online questionnaire and focus group interviews, no respondents had once mentioned they would seek help from parents or their family in Mainland China. So, if they do not turn to their family for support or assistance, to whom they would turn for support. To understand more, in the individual interview with one interviewee, the question to why parental support was not sought was raised.

> *Alice:* *I don't want my parents to worry. They are working very hard to support me to study in Hong Kong. If I tell them my problems, they will get very worried. I just want to let them think I am doing well especially my mother. Every time I call her she will cry because I have never been away from her since I was born. Therefore, I keep all the troubles and problems to myself and not let my parents know. This is the best.*

The interviewee later elaborated in the interview that "*I would rather ask my local friends to help me*". Before moving on further in the interview, the term "local friends" has to be clearly defined as it can be interpreted in two different ways: those from Hong Kong and those who came from Mainland China but newly met in Hong Kong (more specifically at CUHK). It is important to understand what interviewees meant when they were referring to "local friends" and that the interviewee and I are on the same page when discussing about "local friends". Therefore, before the interviewee further explained herself, she was asked to first define what "local friends" actually referred to. The interviewee clarified that "local friends" referred to "those from Hong Kong and study at CUHK". Upon clarification of the term "local friends', the interviewee shared that her roommate is indeed a local student, one who was born, raised and studied in Hong Kong, and they got along very well. Her roommate in the past three months had introduced her to some local students and invited her to attend social activities like eating out, singing karaoke, etc. Although findings in the online questionnaire, individual interviews and focus group interviews showed very few examples (n=3) like this, my own experience suggests it may be significant, at least in some cases. As a lecturer at CUHK, I am also responsible to help run workshops, organize activities and mentor international students. Through these opportunities and experiences, many friendships between the two groups were witnessed. For example, I have seen many local students helping

Mainland Chinese students in my class when they could not understand what I was saying. Precisely, when I was having a research paper consultation with a pair of students, whom I purposely paired them together so they could help each other, the Mainland Chinese student could not understand what I was saying in the consultation and the local student spoke in Putonghua attempting to translate my words. This was not the only episode. In fact, there have been many of these types of episodes but more frequently in Year 2 and 3 students. Again, it may have been that, as mentioned before, the duration of time between the arrival time and data collection time was too short to actually allow these two groups to bond and build friendship. Therefore, the very few examples who resorted to local friends for help may not be the entire picture to the phenomenon. It could well be that the two groups have not had sufficient time and occasions to bond and get to know each other.

The presence of cross-border students, regardless of the number, cannot alone promote intercultural interactions, hence develop intercultural friendships (Ward, 2001). Motlhaka (2016) found that intercultural friendship in higher education is strongly encouraged as an adjustment and teaching and learning tool to cope with the rise of internalization in higher education. Support in particularly peer support is a significant retention factor for first year students. Numerous researchers have advocated the need to promote intercultural friendship among students in higher education institutions since peer support is optimal for adjustment and adaptation (Gareis, Goldman & Merkin, 2018; Motlhaka, 2016; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Wu, Garza & Guzman, 2015). In addition, Severiens and Wolff (2008) found that if student sojourners can feel host destination as a home and can connect well with local students, they are likely to adjust and adapt better. However, some intercultural friendships just as one interviewer commented can be seen as rather interim and temporary.

> *Mike:* *Most of my Hong Kong friends are group project teammates. We cooperated well during the project but after project, we seldom contact with each other anymore. So until now, I can say that I do have some local "friends" whom I can turn to when I have problems, but we are just "simple" but not "real" friends.*

When asking the interviewee to further explain "*simple*" but not "*real*" friends, she explained that many of the friendships developed in a class/course are temporary. That means they only communicate because of the need to complete an assignment or project. Outside of the class or project work, they do not maintain any kind of interactions or communication, not to mention

becoming friends. They do not hang out as ordinary friends do nor do they share their personal lives or feelings with one another. When the course is completed, their so-called friendship ceases. However, during the time in the course and working on assignments or projects, local friends do provide sufficient and useful assistance to tackle the problems and difficulties faced.

Developing ordinary friendship takes time and effort, and establishing and developing intercultural friendship takes even more time and effort because of the cultural differences, language barriers, and diverse social background. Moreover, the tension between Hong Kong and Mainland China has over the last decade been gradually intensified and is unlikely to smoothen anytime soon. Therefore, even when research has pointed out the benefits of peer support gained from intercultural friendship in the adaptation and adjustment process, the establishment of friendship between the two groups of students maintains difficult and challenging.

7.6 Theme 4: Joining local student societies or campus activities

Yu and Zhang (2016) found in their study that many Mainland Chinese students refrained from talking to local students because of language barriers. They chose to participate only in activities that were organized by Mainland Chinese students. On the contrary, some Mainland Chinese students joined social learning opportunities organized by the university or student organizations of the university in hope to increase opportunities to engage into the new environment (Gao, Cheng, & Kelly, 2008). Two interviewees in this study also took an active role to engage into the new environment by joining local student societies or campus activities attempting to make an effort to understand and familiarize with the new environment, people and culture better.

Pauline: I tried to join different student activities organized by local student societies and my hostel. I found that most local students taken part in those activities were quite friendly and kind to me. They didn't mind my pronunciation and cultural differences. They even asked me about my lifestyle and culture in my hometown and we shared interesting topics. We even exchanged contact numbers. I felt that those are the more open-minded students and most of them are seniors (Year 4 students) who are more mature.

Jon: I actually joined one of the local student societies and I quite enjoyed it. The local students there gave me a lot of "inside information" about which course to register and which professors to avoid.

Evidently, very few students took an active role to engage and immerse themselves to interact with local students in order to adapt and adjust to the new environment. When looking more in-depth to the reasons why these respondents had taken the initiative to engage and immerse themselves, they further explained in individual interviews:

Kyle: *I am from Shanghai and the culture is very different from Guangdong (Hong Kong). The major difference is language but it wasn't a big problem during class, just impacted my daily life. I was invited to join an activity organized by local students. The organizers were passionate and friendship and didn't mind my poor English and tried to speak Putonghua to me. At times I couldn't understand why they were laughing at some jokes but I would still pretend I understand and laugh along. I believe joining activities organized by local students would allow me to become less shy and become more comfortable after a while.*

Chris: *It could be that I am from Shenzhen and I understand some Cantonese, even though not a lot. Hong Kong is very close to Shenzhen and Hong Kong people quite often go to Shenzhen for leisure and entertainment. We seemed to have more in common to talk about and discuss.*

The comments from the two respondents reflected the suggestions offered by University of Technology Sydney (UTS) (2009) in the welcoming package for their international exchange students. UTS suggested international students from foreign countries be prepared and to be open-minded with higher acceptance to cultural differences and the possibility of facing issues associated with living and studying beforehand (University of Technology Sydney, 2009). However, the major difference between Sydney and Hong Kong is that Australia is an English-speaking country. Those who study overseas only have to deal with one language challenge but in Hong Kong, English and Cantonese are both official languages. Therefore, having to strike a balance between more than two language barriers at the same time while adapting to a new living and studying environment can be overwhelming for this group of students. Therefore, if Mainland Chinese students are able to be courageous and join local societies and campus activities to expose themselves into the new environment, they will be able to adapt and adjust at CUHK easier and faster. However, the major concern still lies in the tension between Mainland China and Hong Kong and sensitive issues arisen in the last decade. It would take remarkable effort to improve the situation.

7.7 Theme 5: Endurance and Acceptance

In addition to the active approaches, respondents shared through interviews and questionnaires that they just endure and accept whatever happens in life. Research showed that many students who studied abroad experienced the gradual accustomization to the local way of life (Vyas & Yu, 2018). Research showed that students who study abroad very often intend to find ways actively and passively to deal with and manage their adaptation issues and experiences, be it problem-focused strategies or emotional-focused strategies (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Yan, 2017). Problem-focused strategies refer to coping strategies which are direct action to deal with the issues. These strategies often comprise of "*altering or managing the sources of the problem itself*" (Yan, 2017, p.83). On the contrary, emotion-focused strategies focus on how negative impact on issues and/or experiences in lives can be reduced and minimized (Yan, 2017; Herman & Tetrick, 2009; Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989).

The following two strategies adapted by respondents are examples of emotional-focused strategies found in data collected in focus group interviews and individual interviews. First and foremost, enduring and accepting issues arisen in the adaptation without the need to think of an immediate problem-focused strategy is found.

> *Ally:* *I don't think it is necessary to find ways to fix the problems I am facing at this point. Regardless where I go to study, there are going to be problems with adjustment. Adjustment and adaptation is just a part of life. Even the change of moving from high school to university requires adjustment and adaptation. So, I am happy to accept the challenge and become more mature…. I also want to say that dropping out is not an option because my parents will look very bad in their circle so the only way is to accept and keep moving and not give up.*

This comment may sound exceptional but Yan (2017) investigated on the stressors and coping strategies of the Mainland Chinese students who studied abroad in the United States and shared similar findings. Respondents reported the strategy of coping with stress by enduring the stress, because they believed that challenges and difficulties are unavoidable in the process of life. The term "endure" means to persist despite difficulties so to be able to do or achieve something. Thus, only by enduring the challenges and difficulties patiently through acceptance and tolerance will they be able to survive and persevere during the period of studying abroad. This finding is extremely similar to the sharing of my participant in the interview. Despite the challenges faced in adjustment and adaptation, only through demonstrating persistence and carrying on would

mainland Chinese students be able to carry on and study in Hong Kong. The type of mentality is difficult to teach but can be nurtured at a young age to be positive and perseverance. A point to note is the last line of the respondent's comment "…*dropping out is not an option because my parents will look very bad in their circle*…" So, this connects back to the filial piety mentioned in the previous theme. Perhaps parental influence is also a factor or motivating factor for this group of Mainland Chinese students to hold on and move on without stepping back and giving up.

7.8 Theme 6: "Let nature take its course"

While a portion of students sought ways to deal with and manage their adaptation experiences, according to the online questionnaires and individual and focus group interviews, more than half (>60%) of the respondents did not have any coping strategies to deal with or manage their experiences at CUHK. They rather just to go with the flow and do not bother employing any coping strategies. Although this sounds similar to "endurance and acceptance" in the previous theme, it is in fact largely different. Endurance means "*the ability to continue doing something for a period of time and resist, withstand or recover from trauma*" while acceptance means "*accepting a difficult or unpleasant situation"* (Cambridge Dictionary Online, n.d.). When looking at the definitions of the two terms, they both have the connotation of negativity, unpleasantness, trauma, suffering or distress. So enduring and accepting implies that respondents see the experiences and issues they face being negative. Hence, rather than finding a way or method to manage the adaptation issues and experiences, they just endure and accept them as a part of life. Even if they struggle to get through the hardship, it is just a matter of life and reality. On the contrary, doing nothing about it and letting nature take its course does not imply respondents feeling negative about the experiences and issues they face during the adaptation and acculturation process. In fact, the feeling is neutral, neither positive nor negative. These respondents have yet to find a method or way to manage their adaptation experiences, most likely because they have only arrived for a short period of time or roughly only a few months. Therefore, respondents are only waiting to see what could be done, rather than enduring and accepting that issues and experiences are likely to become a part of their studying abroad in Hong Kong.

To understand this emotional-focused coping strategy in greater depth, a question was asked in the individual interview whether participants were able to find ways to tackle the problems and barriers faced since their arrival at CUHK. Similar responses were "*not yet*". While most

participants had yet to find ways to deal with and manage the challenges, some of the added "*let nature takes its course*" or "*take it easy and let whatever happens*". Yue (1993) studied the coping strategies and resources used by Chinese students when studying overseas. He found the coping strategies employed by this group of students reflected a certain degree of Confucianism and Taoism, both played significant roles in school of philosophy in Chinese history (Yan, 2017). When examining in greater depth, Yue (1993) found Confucianism focuses on self-reflection and endurance. The cultural concept practiced in Confucianism focuses on being responsible for what happened but not to blame others and conducting self-examination and reflection to find ways seek internal harmony (Muller, 1990; Muller, 2020; Wong, 2008). Similarly, Taoism advocates seeking internal harmony to be freed from distractions and anxiety, thus individuals can find peace within themselves and whatever life brings about (Honderich, 1995; Frank, 2000; Yan 2017). Taking it easy or letting nature takes its course does not mean taking a passive stance when facing problems or challenges nor enduring and accepting them as there are no other choices. Rather, it encourages individuals to practice an attitude of "*letting it happen submits all matters of life to fate*" (Yan, 2017, p.27), a much more positive and laid back strategy at least not seeing the matters negatively. Similar findings, letting nature takes its course or taking it easy appeared in other studies (Frank, 2000; Xu, 2002) which investigated the coping strategies among Chinese students when studying overseas. Both studies concurrently revealed when Chinese students were confronted by challenges and difficulties while sojourning at universities in the United States, many employed a "take it easy" or "let nature takes its course" strategy. Again, the non-action strategy does not mean doing nothing and just passively allowing situation to drift. In fact, this non-action strategy is a more subtle way of allowing more time to reflect, think and plan instead of taking impulsive actions or contrary to the best interests of individuals.

7.9 Theme 7: The Unspoken Answers

When reviewing transcripts of focus group and individual interviews, in particular focus group interviews, it appeared that some respondents when answering the question of how they cope with the experiences and/or issues they faced, a few answered "*I don't know*" or simply not answering the question. This is worth to look deeper into and discover factors and/or possible explanations to what may have influenced their contribution in the interviews. Several suggestive speculations have been drawn when analyzing the data.

First, it could have been that respondents could not express the experiences/issues due to the complexity of the language. As the interviews were done in English, and given that these respondents have already mentioned that one of the barriers/obstacles they have been facing so far is language, it could well be that they were unable to talk about the situation or were too embarrassed to explain themselves in English. Be it in a focus group interview or individual interview, respondents were nervous and with the need to use English to explain themselves. Thus, respondents may feel more nervous and stressful and rather remain silence or simply making their answer brief and simple, but not exactly what they intended to express. When deciding the language to be used in the focus group, both Putonghua (the native language L1 of the respondents) had been considered. However, after thinking thoroughly, English was selected to be the language used in data collection including focus group interview and individual interview as well as online questionnaire. The rationale behind selecting English was that I (as the investigator) am not too familiar with Putonghua. While I could understand conversational Putonghua, I have trouble using it in spoken format. Moreover, when translating the discussion and interview script from Putonghua to English, I would imagine some essence would be lost in the process of translation. Whether L1 or L2 were selected, there would appear issues in both ends (the investigator and respondents). On a related note, "I don't know how to say it in English" is a phrase quite often heard in both focus group and individual interviews. Respondents very often had something they wanted to say, but due to language barrier, they would try and give up by saying "I don't know how to say it in English" or ask "Can I say it in Chinese?" Under these circumstances, respondents were encouraged to speak in English at which I would assist them by rephrasing and help them complete their thoughts by suggesting words or phrases to help them organize and complete their thoughts or what they want to say. Yet, this could affect their original ideas as some would simply just agree with me even if their original ideas may be different from what I suggested.

In addition, the lacking of confidence to speak in a group or individually with me could also be a factor to why respondents answered "*I don't know*" or simply not answering the question. It has been observed that many of the respondents were quite nervous and lacked confidence when engaging with their peers in the focus group interviews. Not only did they lack confidence in speaking in English, they also felt nervous when speaking in front of a group of unacquainted peers. This could well affect their willingness to speak and answer the questions or even telling their true meaning. Even when the less outspoken ones were invited to speak when they had

remained silence for quite some time, they would say “nothing” or just simply nod their head and smile.

The above suggestive speculations point out possible factors which could have influenced the contributions and sharing in the interviews. It is also worth to note that some respondents may be too embarrassed or shy to talk about their experiences. For example, they may feel embarrassed for having a particular feeling while their peers or other respondents shared otherwise. These factors relate to various possible factors such as language, emotional and confidence.

7.10 Conclusion of the chapter

This chapter has reported and discussed study participants’ experiential narratives of ways, strategies and approaches used in dealing with and managing the experiences they faced in Hong Kong since their arrival. Together with Chapter 5 and 6, these narratives revealed some participants had taken active approaches to deal with and manage the experiences while some had either no identify coping strategies or did not find it would be necessary to deal with the experiences at that stage. Previous research suggested that Chinese international students have the most difficulty in adaptation to life when studying abroad (Perkins, 1977; Yan, 2017; Yao, 1983). Not only do they have to deal with adjustment to language, they also have to adapt and adjust to lifestyle, value system, racial or religious discrimination, homesickness, etc. (Yao, 1983; Perkins 1977). Identifying possible coping strategies would allow prospective Mainland Chinese students who find interest studying abroad, especially in Hong Kong, to better prepare themselves for the adaptation and adjustment experiences and challenges.

Chapter 8
Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Summary of the Study

Cross-border education has existed since the earliest formations of higher education, beginning with the University of Paris opening its doors to scholars outside France to train its students in the 13th century (Caruana, 2014). The acceleration of globalization and internationalization has increased the accessibility and mobility to go overseas or move across borders for education. When entering an unfamiliar culture setting, cross-border or international students have to adapt and adjust to their new environment. Hong Kong, with a unique historic background, an international financial hub and a city where east meets west, has been a popular higher education destination for international students in recent decades. International students comprise of a sizable portion of the student body in universities in Hong Kong and their adaptation experiences in their study is an important issue not only for the students themselves, but for teaching staff, university administration and research communities.

The number of cross-border students (students from Mainland China) pursuing higher education in Hong Kong have grown noticeably in the two decades since the handover of Hong Kong sovereignty in 1997. What appeals to cross-border students is not just the proximity, but also the unique and distinctive western style education universities in Hong Kong offer. Without going overseas, cross-border students seem able to enjoy the western style education system and living environment with a similar culture as theirs. Among the eight government sponsored universities in Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) has over the years been a top and favoured choice among Mainland Chinese students because of the bilingual education it provides. The unique and distinctive background and medium of instruction at CUHK provided a strong incentive to carry out the study to investigate the adaptation issues Mainland Chinese students face in their initial stage of study at CUHK and living in Hong Kong.

This study has explored first year mainland Chinese students' linguistic and socio-cultural adaptation experiences at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and how they dealt with the experiences faced. It addressed the following three main research questions:

1) What are the reasons for mainland Chinese students studying in Hong Kong having chosen Hong Kong as their higher education destination?
2) What linguistic and socio-cultural experiences do they face upon arrival and throughout their first year study at the Chinese University of Hong Kong?
3) How do they deal with and manage the experiences they face in Hong Kong?

8.2 Reflection on the Research Process

Data collection of this longitudinal and largely qualitative ethnographic study adopted a mix-method approach. Participants selected for the study were solely voluntary and remained anonymous. The process began with the dissemination of an online questionnaire and continued with a series of structured and semi-structured individual and group interviews spanned across the academic year of 2016-2017. The online questionnaire, which was disseminated to all year one Mainland Chinese students, captured responses regarding respondents' background (age, gender, demographic information, etc.). This questionnaire was also meant to be a tool to invite interested participants to take part in individual and group interviews. Participants were not pressured in any way and could indicate their willingness to participate in the interviews by providing their contact detail in the questionnaire. While getting some basic background information about the participants was the initial goal, the online questionnaire also provided a platform to get general idea of participants' adaptation experiences so far (since their arrival two to three months previously) to help come up with questions that could be used in the interview to get a fuller picture of their experiences, challenges, or other issues faced. Initial adaptation challenges and issues collected through questionnaires were mainly that participants had trouble communicating with their peers, were not able to fully understand lectures, were unable to make friends, and were confused by the term "bilingualism".

Some complexities were faced during the research process. Although many of the voluntary participants were my students, which was advantageous with demographic convenience, some were actually students from other classes. Thus, it was difficult to maintain regular contact and communication. However, with the help from some of my colleagues who would regularly remind the students to reply to my emails and report to the scheduled interviews, all rounds of interviews were carried out successfully. Another complexity faced during the interviews was the language barrier. As mentioned in various chapters, participants repeatedly reported that they faced a

language barrier. This also appeared during the interviews. Some participants could not get their message across using English so a lot of assistance had to be provided. In order to avoid distorting the original meaning, I asked participants to write in English if they did not know how to explain orally in English. Most students felt more comfortable doing so because they thought writing it would be easier. One or two participants would write in Chinese and I would, on the spot, translate what they had written and confirm whether that was indeed the original meaning. Although language barrier had occasionally interrupted a few rounds of interviews and created extra workload, it was well worth the time because it could help generate the most honest and truthful feedback from the participants.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, after the initial round of individual and group interviews, a series of political disturbances took place in Hong Kong. With a year of different political incidents occurring during these students' adaptation period, an extended interview was introduced to get a deeper understanding of their experiences and reflections. Originally the interviews were scheduled for late October and early November 2017 but for health reasons (I suffered acute cholecystitis and had to undergo emergency surgery) all scheduled interviews had to be postponed to late November and early December 2017. However, by that time, some of the participants had left Hong Kong to return to their hometowns for the one-month winter holiday. Fortunately, four students showed willingness to be interviewed as they were either staying in Hong Kong for the winter break or would be leaving Hong Kong later in the month. These four were also very helpful and understanding towards my condition and agreed to communicate and supplement additional information and sharing via email after the extended interview if necessary.

During the process of manual transcription and data analysis, I discovered that some of my research participants spoke fluent Cantonese. When studied deeper, they were those coming from the Guangdong region and could be categorized as "mainland native Cantonese speakers". This was emerged only during the process of transcription and data analysis and was not anticipated when designing the research methodology and approaches. This would have been worthy to investigate, by distinguishing whether they are "mainland native Cantonese speakers" as their cultural background and the different kind of Cantonese would have impacted their adaptation experiences. From data collected, it has some indications that those from Mainland China who speak Cantonese seem to emerge themselves better in Hong Kong when compared with their counterparts.

During the writing of the thesis - after completion of data collection in 2018 - a number of further incidents emerged, including committing suicide, conflicts between Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese students due to political incidents or cultural struggles, cyber-bulling, etc. have also emerged. Incidents such as the clash between local and Mainland Chinese students in the posters put up on the Democracy Wall at CUHK in 2017, the on-going protests since 2019 triggered by the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance, as well as the most recent National Security Law enacted by the central government of China, have further intensified the tensions between the two groups and sparked violence, open confrontations and other unnecessary conflicts. The tensions and conflicts have not only appeared at universities in Hong Kong but overseas as well. Violent altercations between the two groups have been seen at university campuses in Australia, Canada and the United States (Sharma, 2019; Goldberg, 2019). Moreover, with growing tension between China and the United States, it is foreseeable that in the near future, more students from Mainland China will consider Hong Kong as their higher education destination - the United States might possibly sanction China, and thus limit the number of international student visas issued. Furthermore, the most recent Covid-19 outbreak has brought normal operations of universities almost to a halt. Hence, more challenges are likely to emerge into Mainland Chinese students' adaptation at universities in Hong Kong. Therefore, the study provides insights into Mainland Chinese students' concerns and offers possible solutions to soothe their adaptation experiences in Hong Kong.

While I had intended to carry out more extended interviews to grasp participants' feelings, it proved impossible to do so. CUHK was the epicenter of the clashes, protests and stand-off. On November 13, 2019, the University, in the wake of fierce clashes and protests on the campus, an escalated stand-off between students and police (which spread to other university campuses), disruption to public transport - a city-wide halt for three consecutive days - and severe damages on the CUHK campus, abruptly ended the academic term (CUHK, 2019; China Daily, 2019; Chan, Zhang & Sum, 2019). Consulates of different countries began evacuating international students back to their home countries and all remaining seven universities in Hong Kong cancelled face-to-face classes shortly afterwards, arranging online teaching instead (China Daily, 2019). A group of mainland students at CUHK who were unable to leave campus due to the roadblocks on campus and the closure of the severely damaged train station called the police for assistance. The Hong Kong police arranged a marine vessel to transport these students to a safe location and there the group sought ways to return home on their own (Cheng, 2019). Interviewing some of the Mainland

Chinese students would have provided fascinating and in-depth first-hand information on this incident; it was unfortunately impossible to achieve.

What is more, during the process of manual transcription and data analysis, I discovered that 4 of my research participants spoke fluent Cantonese. When studied deeper, they were those coming from the Guangdong region and could be categorized as "mainland native Cantonese speakers". This was not anticipated when designing the study, and emerged only during the process of transcription and data analysis. On reflection, this points to an issue which would have been worth investigating: while "mainland native Cantonese speakers" have a distinct cultural background and speak a different kind of Cantonese, they are linguistically much closer to Hong Kong Cantonese speakers, and have fewer problems with understanding and being understood as compared to native Putonghua speakers. This may well have led to different adaptation experiences. Data collected showed indications that those from Mainland China who speak Cantonese seem to immerse themselves better in Hong Kong when compared to their native Putonghua-speaking counterparts. However, although these "mainland native Cantonese speakers" speak fluent to somewhat Cantonese, they still consider Putonghua their native language (L1); their number in my study was small; and I did not think it large enough to justify analysing them as a distinct group. In retrospect, selecting some research participants who were proficient in Cantonese would have given some further insights into the relative roles of language and culture.

8.3 Conclusion of Results and Findings

Findings relating to each research question were reported separately in Chapters 4 to 7. The following sections highlight the relevant findings and implications from the study and discuss their potential contributions to the field.

8.3.1 Reasons for choosing Hong Kong as a higher education destination

Reasons why this group of Mainland Chinese students chose Hong Kong as their higher education destination instead of their counterparts were explored in Chapter 4. The study adopted a mixed method research to look into the research questions which are in multiple perspectives. Online questionnaire followed by individual and focus group interviews were used. Results showed that the decision made by this group of students was influenced by push-pull factors which accords with Bodycott (2009). Common pull factors which were found to have an impact on Mainland

Chinese students when choosing their host destination included CUHK offering bilingual education, Hong Kong being a stepping-stone to further study abroad, financial considerations (tuition fee and scholarship), Hong Kong's close geographical proximity. Other factors, such as parental influence, also played a part. Findings implied that Hong Kong may not always be the top choice of Mainland Chinese students when choosing Hong Kong and CUHK as a host destination, but taking into account constraints such as cost and expenses (Zheng, 2003) and economic motives (Li & Bray, 2007), Hong Kong has clear advantages. However, with the on-going social unrest, political turmoil and tensions, conflicts between the "locals" and "mainlanders", and the drifting relationship between China and the United States, it is foreseeable that Mainland Chinese students will consider other options such as staying in their home country instead of studying abroad, applying to universities in other countries, such as Europe. Moreover, with the uncertainties and precarious future of cross-border higher education brought by Covid-19, when international ports and borders will reopen remains uncertain. Hong Kong may no longer be a top choice for Mainland Chinese students in the near future. That said, I believe a number of Mainland Chinese students will still consider Hong Kong as the host destination given its proximity; in this event, however, their adaptation experiences, especially socio-culturally, are likely to be more challenging and unpredictable.

8.3.2 Linguistic and socio-cultural experiences

The linguistic and socio-cultural experiences this group of students face upon arrival and through their first year of study at CUHK were explored. Findings through rounds of interviews were set out in Chapter 5. In terms of linguistic experiences, a confusion around the term "bilingual(ism)", language barriers (Cantonese and English) as well as academic pressure, were adverse challenges reported by participants in their first year. As for socio-cultural issues and challenges faced, participants reported meeting friends, friendship, discrimination, culture, identity, loneliness and politics as their main problems. During data collection in 2016-2017, the political turmoil in Hong Kong caused concern to mainland students. To examine further the impact these had, extended interviews were conducted to get a richer and more contextualized picture. Moreover, since data were collected in five different stages over the one-year period, changes in between stages were inevitable. Therefore, I compared and contrasted findings in different stages and identified shifts and changes. Differences were reported across the five stages in both linguistic and socio-cultural experiences. Though findings showed no significant changes in linguistic experiences, changes

were more evident in socio-cultural experiences. Common linguistic challenges and issues reported by participants were mainly the language barrier (Cantonese and English) and academic pressure; these were mentioned throughout the five stages. Even in the extended interview, when the focus was more on how they felt about the recent political incidents and turmoil at CUHK and Hong Kong, all four participants still reported language as one of the continuing problems faced. That was somewhat expected. International students, when studying abroad regardless of destination, have different level of difficulties adapting to the host country's first language and differences in education systems; it takes time for international students to adapt to linguistic differences. However, a major difference between studying in Hong Kong and overseas countries is that in Hong Kong, international students are constantly struggling with two different languages; in English-speaking countries, by contrast, they must adapt only to English.

In contrast to linguistic experiences, socio-cultural challenges could be more unpredictable and unexpected due to unforeseen circumstances and factors such as politics. Gradual changes in socio-cultural experiences were reported over different stages. In earlier stages, participants reported mainly friendship and cultural challenges and problems in their adaptation. Although it seemed that participants apparently adapted and adjusted quite well, in reality, some issues and challenges were just not revealed or faced at the time the interviews were conducted. Since participants had only been in Hong Kong and CUHK for roughly two months, their problems were mostly related to language barriers, and to academic pressures caused by linguistic issues such as insufficient knowledge in English and inability to communicate in Cantonese. They did not have sufficient time to engage in university activities or deal with issues outside their study. They were most likely trying to get through the first part of the school term. Therefore, as time progressed, changes were more evident in socio-cultural rather than linguistic experiences.

It also became apparent that the longer they spent at CUHK, the more challenges, issues and conflicts arose. This implies that it may take longer for socio-cultural issues and problems to be revealed, to develop, when compared with linguistic challenges. In later stages of the interviews, participants mainly discussed friendship issues. They felt that local students showed little desire to embrace them into their circles. They thought that, given some time, the situation would improve. Yet, time proved that the situation was not what they expected. A common complaint reported was that Hong Kong students were generally reluctant to speak Putonghua. They

preferred Cantonese. Contrary to their belief and expectation that this situation would improve as time progressed, after having more interaction with local students on campus, more socio-cultural conflicts and issues apart from friendship began to emerge. These conflicts and issues included discrimination, politics, loneliness and homesickness; this is similar to those reported by Ward and Searle (1991). Although the findings found Ward and Searle (1991) were 30 years ago, a time when Mainland Chinese students coming to Hong Kong for higher education was rare. Yet, the findings surprising still applied to the phenomenon today. This implies that these conflicts and issues are possible adaptation issues worldwide, not limited to English-speaking countries.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, there are four phases of sojourn experience: honeymoon, crisis, recover and adjustment (Lysgaard, 1995). Yet, for the group of mainland students studied the honeymoon phrase was rather brief; they remained in the crisis phase for a long period of time. Lysgaard (1995) and Oberg (1960) both reported that with a gradual increase of contact and acquaintance from the host country and culture, student sojourners begin to recovery and adjust. However, findings supported that the mainland students at CUHK were trapped in the crisis phase for three to six months - much longer period than the honeymoon phase (Lysgaard, 1995; Oberg, 1960) - and some showed no signs of recovery or adjustment. However, as data were collected in the first year, more research is needed to understand whether participants can recover and adjust during their later stages of study at CUHK.

8.3.3 Coping Strategies

Chapter 6 focused on how the mainland students dealt with and managed their experiences. Through interviews with participants, seven coping strategies were identified: taking Cantonese lessons, making friends only with students from similar background, soliciting help from local (i.e. Hong Kong) friends, joining local student societies or campus activities, and endurance and acceptance. These coping strategies played an important role in participants' adaptation experiences. With another three or four years at CUHK and in Hong Kong, such strategies could help them adapt. Besides the coping strategies identified, many participants just "let nature take its course". At the same time, some had not found a way to deal with their experiences and had yet to find a way of coping.

Using mixed methods to collect and analyze data, this study has contributed to the increasing research literature on internationalization in higher education mainland Chinese students' adaptation in cross-border tertiary institutions and English-speaking countries, acculturation, cultural shock, and coping strategies. It has done so through a longitudinal case study which used a sequential explanatory design to capture mainland students' experiential accounts of their reasons for choosing Hong Kong and CUHK as a tertiary education destination, their linguistic and socio-cultural experiences upon arrival and throughout their first year of study at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and how they dealt with and managed these experiences.

Extensive research suggested international students often face language and cultural adjustment, leading to the difficulty in integrating with school life (Wilton & Constantine, 2003; Bevis, 2002; Cole & Ahmadi, 2003). As mentioned in Chapters 4 and 5, these two challenges were commonly reported by participants. The problems, conflicts and incidents aroused by language and cultural adjustment were commonly seen in stage 1, which was supposed to be the honeymoon phase, of this study and could also be found in later stages. Oberg (1960) and Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) found that sojourners generally faced and dealt with stress, depression or adaptation/adjustment difficulties most significantly in the first three months of their arrival in the host destination. Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001) reported that generally the process began improving starting the fourth to the sixth month after their arrival. However, findings in my study are somewhat different. Contrary to this literature, in my study participants reported more difficulty in adaptation and adjustment as well as stress and pressure after the third month of their arrival. As a matter of fact, the adaptation issues and challenges most participants reported in the first stage was merely the inability to make friends with local students, and the language barrier (the use of Cantonese in social life and communicating and English in their study). More challenges gradually emerged in stage 3 and 4 with participants reporting that they faced not only language barrier and friendship problems in adaptation, but also discrimination, academic pressure, culture, identity, politics, grade matters, and pressure caused by workload. The process did not improve in the fourth month and thereafter, but in fact deteriorated even up to 12 months after their arrival (see Chapter 6, Tables 1 and 2). Hence, integration in school life, and living in Hong Kong, became even more difficult later in their period at CUHK.

Kher, Juneau and Molstad (2003) reported that lack of support in academic procedures made sojourners' adaptation experiences even more adverse. While the findings in this study did not directly lead to the conclusion that participants felt that support was sufficient, participants implied on different occasions that support was inadequate. For example, a number of participants in group and individual interviews pointed out that they did not know who to turn to or where to seek help when they faced issues with their academic work or when they had conflicts with academic staff. This implied that the lack of academic support on campus made adaptation more challenging and difficult. The findings also indicated soliciting help from the university was not a common solution to Mainland Chinese students. In the findings, participants they would turn to help from local friends or let the problems "eventually disappear" or "just let nature takes its course". This implies that either Mainland Chinese students are reluctant to solicit help from the school or they do not know where to find it. The lack of clear support mechanisms seems to make their adaptation even more difficult in later stages of their studies. This adds to a limited number of empirical studies that point to significance of the "*emergence of strategy use as a process directly connected to the practices of cultural groups*" (Donato & McCormick, 1994, p.453; Parks & Raymond, 2004).

To sum up, the study addressed the lack of established practical and useful strategies at tertiary institutions for dealing with the conflicts and experiences arising from the political turmoil described in Chapter 5. Concerning the practical questions of how to support and help increasing international mobility, the findings indicate the importance and urgency of introducing useful and practical schemes to help the increasing number of mainland Chinese students to adapt not only in Hong Kong but elsewhere.

8.4 Recommendations

This study began with a practical concern: the sharp increase in mainland students seeking for higher education opportunities abroad call for support schemes which help them adapt and survive smoothly. Exploring the participants' adaptation experiences, and how they dealt with them, the study concludes that the current schemes established by the institution, and used by mainland Chinese students, are insufficient to address the challenges and enable such students to cope and make successful transitions. The answers to the research questions that framed the study provide a clear picture of their experiences and coping strategies. At the same time, the answers also revealed resistance to the coping strategies participants use during their adaptation at CUHK. The

findings suggest that there is a strong need to improve the support schemes the institution currently provides, or to employ more alternative methods to help this group of cross-border students adapt better, in particular during the initial year.

In terms of linguistics adaptation experiences, it was clear that using Cantonese and English were the major issues faced. Cantonese is the official spoken language and the dominant language in the daily life in the aspects of social, cultural and political events and activities in Hong Kong (Pierson, 1998; Pierson, 2017; Tsui, 2004; Lee & Leung, 2012; Lai, 2009; Hyland, 1997). Even though most students at CUHK can speak or communicate in Putonghua, because Putonghua is a compulsory subject for all Hong Kong students starting from primary level, Cantonese is still the dominant dialect in daily communication. What is more, the political turmoil that developed during the time of this study, as illustrated and discussed in Chapter 5, seems to have led to local students developing a sort of resistance to communicating with this group of students; speaking Putonghua may even have aroused some discomfort and distress among local students. Thus, in order for this group of students to easily adapt to CUHK and Hong Kong, Cantonese courses should be made available to these new students before the start of the academic year. Findings from both interviews and questionnaires reveal that the mainland students hope Cantonese courses could be made available for them so that it would be easier to communicate with local students and people. Such students could arrive one month prior to the official start of the school year so that they can get familiar with the environment as well as taking Cantonese courses either offered by the university, college or mainland student associations. For those unable to come so early, online courses and eLearning sessions via different online teaching platforms could be made available. Those unable to understand and converse in basic Cantonese find communication significantly blocked. Furthermore, the University could provide more counselling, support and encouragement to both groups of students in order to promote a more inclusive attitude on campus.

In addition, transitional English courses could also be provided for this group of students as the English curriculum and syllabus in Mainland China differs greatly from that of Hong Kong. Findings indicate that the respondents found it difficult to use English in their learning. Since they were not exposed to the use of English in teaching and learning in their home country, the change was substantial and caused stress and academic pressure. Currently, all first year students have to undertake a foundation English course offered by the English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU).

The course aims to help first year students develop skills needed for their university studies and learning topics include research writing, critical listening, reading and response, and features of spoken English. Students are pre-assigned to the course based on their major subject of study. That means all students majoring in Engineering will be studying together. The advantage of this "mixed-ability grouping" arrangement allows students with different abilities to study together and have more opportunities to interact and help one another. Yet, the major drawback is this group of students from Mainland China are not on par in terms of English ability and proficiency when compared with local students who have been familiar with the use of English as a medium of instruction since primary school. Therefore, it would be more sensible and practical if this group of students were assigned a pre-university level English course before taking this foundation English course. This type of arrangement is commonly seen in English-speaking countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia where foreign students can undertake English as a second language course before enrolling in university-level courses which assume students have already acquired English proficiency comparable to local students.

Lastly, universities in Hong Kong can better balance the recruitment of Mainland and non-local students. Internationalization requires a much greater diversity of non-local students or international students. Currently, the largest population of non-local students is those from Mainland China. Universities should increase their efforts to recruit top-quality international students from different parts of the world in order to further diversify the population of non-local students.

These measures will not only help students adapt better to their study at CUHK, but also reduce the amount of pressure and stress caused by language barriers.

8.5 Limitations

The current study investigated and explored mainland Chinese students' adaptation experiences in Hong Kong and how they dealt with and managed them. This is an exploratory as well as experimental study which has some methodological limitations, including the limited number and range of participants. Other limitations include the duration of time I could investigate and follow-up on the participants to see if they experienced any changes through their first year. Even though mixed methods, including an online questionnaire, individual interviews, focus group interviews

and extended interviews were used, the inability to follow participants through their entire first year of study made it impossible to identify the extent of improvement or deterioration in their use of coping strategies. In addition, while this study focuses on first year students only, future research should explore the experiences of second, third and fourth year students and compare these with the first year students'. Future research can also explore whether participants do in fact recover and adjust in later years of their study as Lysgaard (1995) and Oberg (1960) suggest.

8.6 Further Research

As mentioned in the Limitation section, a series of political events and turmoil and, more recently, fierce protests and clashes between students and the Hong Kong Police, and the Covid-19 outbreak, have forced Mainland Chinese students to return to their homes and continue their studies via eLearning. Future research can further look into how all the political turmoil have impacted on their adaptation and how they have dealt with and managed it when help is far away and may not be easily reached.

The Covid-19 outbreak, as mentioned earlier, has changed the way higher education institutions operate. Since the outbreak began in late January 2020, universities worldwide have been forced to suspend classes. Borders and ports are closed and travel restrictions and bans have been enforced. Social distancing and other health protection measures have been put in place to ensure the health and wellbeing of international students. In Hong Kong, the situation is very similar. Face-to-face teaching at CUHK has been suspended since February 2020 and the situation of the new academic term (Fall 2020) is still uncertain. All of these implementations will have some sort of effect and impact on the future of international students: when and whether it is possible and safe for them to come back to Hong Kong/CUHK due to the disruption of cross-border transportation, cross-border immigration control and the health and safety of various parties concerned. It is worth exploring how these students felt about home learning using Zoom, which was chosen by most universities in Hong Kong as the primary platform to support synchronous teaching and learning activities, in comparison with physically attending lessons at CUHK (CUHK, 2019). Online teaching is a complex endeavor because most courses are not pedagogically designed to be taught fully online such as language courses, etc. Both academic staff are not trained to deliver online teaching whilst this novel learning style is a new shift. This rapid and sudden shift lacked transition, and thus force Mainland Chinese students to endure more challenges

than they already have. The precarious future of higher education is expected to be reshaped and technology is going to play a big part in the reshape of the future. Therefore, it is important to understand the first-hand experiences of this group of stakeholders in order to get ready and prepare for the unforeseeable changes around the globe. Findings would help to prepare future students who still consider Hong Kong and CUHK as their host destination.

Researchers around the world are working hard and dedicating a lot of time to study the virus in hope to find a vaccine and cure. Yet social science and education research must not stop because there is a new learning experience and educators need to know how the change has impacted and will impact students, educators and administrators. Future research in the above areas would bring fascinating insights to the higher education community.

8.7 Conclusion

In summary, this study revealed a number of adaptation challenges, issues and problems first year Mainland Chinese students faced and how they dealt with and managed them. The findings are useful and important because of the rapid economic development in China, especially the Pearl River Delta as well as Greater Bay Area which comprises of the nine municipalities of Guangdong Province, Hong Kong and Macau. The unmet demand for higher education opportunities in Hong Kong is likely to continue to be high at least for the next few years. Findings in the study also highlight the importance for universities in Hong Kong to develop and implement better programmes and provide more supportive measures to cultivate academic efficacy and reduce instances of conflicts between local and Mainland Chinese students. Developing more helpful and useful methods would help Mainland Chinese students adapt better and offer a high quality academic and intercultural learning environment for them.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Top/Popular Choices of Destinations for International Students

	Destination country	Total number of students
1	US	740482
2	UK	427686
3	France	271399
4	Australia	249588
5	Germany	206986
6	Russia	173627
7	Japan	150617
8	Canada	120960
9	China	88979
10	Italy	77732
11	South Africa	70428
12	Malaysia	63625
13	South Korea	59472
14	Austria	58056
15	Netherlands	57509
16	Spain	55759
17	United Arab Emirates	54162
18	Singapore	52959
19	Egypt	49011
20	Saudi Arabia	46566

Source: http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/jul/17/top-20-countries-international-students

Appendix 2: Global Flow of International Student Mobility

Top 16 Destinations from neighboring regions

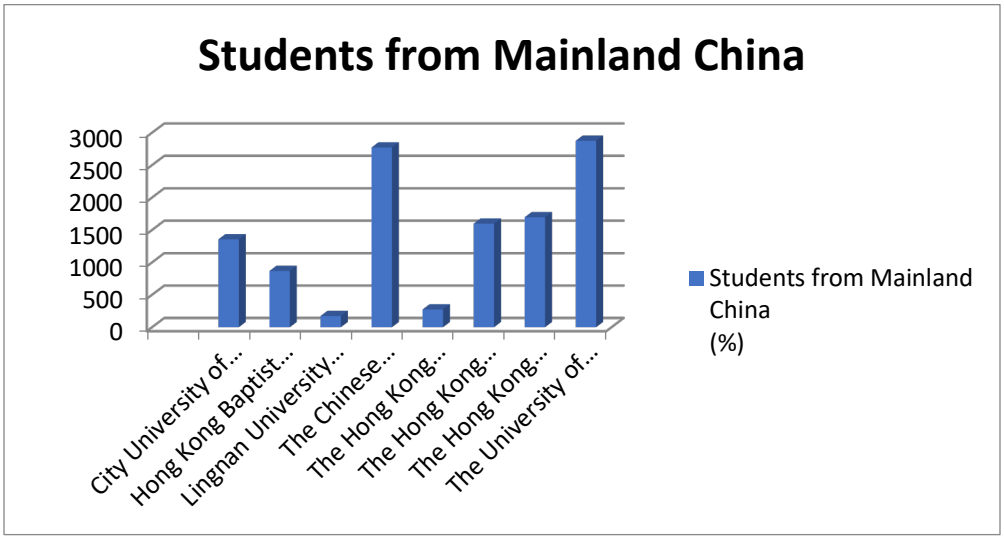
	Hong Kong	Macau	China	Singapore	Japan	South Korea
1.	United Kingdom	Australia	United States	Australia	United States	United States
2.	Australia	United States	Japan	United Kingdom	United Kingdom	Japan
3.	United States	United Kingdom	Australia	United States	Australia	Australia
4.	Canada	China	United Kingdom	Canada	Germany	United Kingdom
5.	Macau	Switzerland	South Korea	New Zealand	France	Germany
6.	South Korea	Portugal	Canada	Egypt	South Korea	France
7.	Ireland	Canada	Hong Kong	Germany	Canada	Canada
8.	Switzerland	El Salvador	France	Ireland	New Zealand	New Zealand
9.	Norway	Italy	Germany	Japan	Brazil	Malaysia
10.	Romania	South Korea	New Zealand	Switzerland	Thailand	Hong Kong
11.	Thailand	Hungary	Macau	Malaysia	Italy	Thailand
12.	Italy	Belgium	Italy	France	Hungary	Italy
13.	South Africa	Mozambique	Thailand	India	Finland	Netherlands
14.	India	Jordan	Netherlands	Saudi Arabia	Turkey	Brazil
15.	Belgium	Belarus	Malaysia	Netherlands	Austria	South Africa
16.	Luxemburg	Bermuda	Sweden	Hong Kong	Netherlands	Mongolia

Top 16 Destinations from English speaking countries

	United States	United Kingdom	Australia	Canada	New Zealand
1.	United Kingdom	United States	United States	United States	Australia
2.	Canada	Ireland	New Zealand	United Kingdom	United States
3.	Germany	France	United Kingdom	Australia	United Kingdom
4.	France	Australia	Germany	France	Germany
5.	Australia	Germany	Canada	Ireland	Canada
6.	New Zealand	Canada	Japan	United Arab Emirates	Japan
7.	Japan	Netherlands	France	Saudi Arabia	South Korea
8.	Dominican Republic	Denmark	United Arab Emirates	Germany	France
9.	Israel	United Arab Emirates	Denmark	South Korea	United Arab Emirates
10.	South Korea	Austria	Saudi Arabia	Poland	Switzerland
11.	South Africa	Spain	Switzerland	Switzerland	Denmark
12.	Ireland	New Zealand	Turkey	New Zealand	Austria
13.	United Arab Emirates	Switzerland	Austria	India	Malaysia
14.	Saint Kitts and Nevis	Czech Republic	India	Japan	Netherlands
15.	Switzerland	South Africa	Ireland	Netherlands	India
16.	Poland	Japan	South Korea	Hungary	Ireland

Source: http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-student-flow-viz.aspx

Appendix 3: Mainland Students in Hong Kong (2014)



University (UGC-funded)	Total Student Population	Local Students (%)	Students from Mainland China (%)	Other parts of Asia (%)	Rest of the world (%)
City University of Hong Kong (CITYU)	13725	11836	1355	425	109
Hong Kong Baptist University (BU)	7174	6257	867	28	22
Lingnan University (LU)	2614	2403	173	19	19
The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK)	19306	15988	2772	430	116
The Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd)	8661	8367	274	18	2
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU)	17363	15348	1597	320	98
The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST)	10229	7736	1696	662	135
The University of Hong Kong (HKU)	18511	14496	2876	930	209

Appendix 4: Invitation Letter/Email for Participants

PhD Study: Internationalization in Higher Education - Mainland Chinese students' adaptation experiences upon arrival in Hong Kong

Researcher: Ma Yuk Yi, Anna

Information Sheet For Participants

You are being invited to be involved in this research study. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with other members of staff from your school if you wish. Please contact me if anything is unclear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

Aims: The study aims to enrich the understanding of mainland Chinese students' initial tertiary study experiences in Hong Kong, thus generating suggestions on how university educators could support and ease the transitional period more effectively, and reduce tensions, conflicts and disputes between 'mainlanders' and 'Hongkongers'.

Requirements: The questionnaire will take place in October 2016. Face-to-face Interviews will be conducted in October, December, January, March and May. The interview will be based around a semi structured interview pattern and will take approximately 30 minutes. It is intended as an opportunity for you to express your experiences in your first year study: including, but not restricted to:

1) Internationalisation of higher education in Hong Kong

2) Issues around linguistic and socio-cultural challenges

3) Ways of dealing and managing the experiences faced in Hong Kong

The interviews will be recorded, and later transcribed into text form.

Anonymity/Participation: As part of the presentation of results, your own words may be used in text form. This will be anonymised, so that you cannot be identified from what you said. All of the research data will be stored in a secure place in a separate, password-protected file from any data supplied.

Please note that:

- You can decide to stop the interview at any point
- You need not answer questions that you do not wish to
- Your name will be removed from the information and anonymised. It should not be possible to identify anyone from my reports on this study.

It is up to you to decide whether to take part or not. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw during the interview or any time and without giving a reason. If you withdraw from the study all data will be withdrawn and destroyed.

I hope you will agree to take part, but please be assured that your decision to participate, or not to participate, or to withdraw at a later date, will not affect the marks or grades you receive.

If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form.

Once the thesis arising from this research has been completed, a brief summary of the findings will be made available by the researcher upon application. It is also possible that the results will be presented at academic conferences and journals. The data will be kept securely for ten years from the date of publication, before being destroyed.

If this study has harmed you in any way you can contact the University of Nottingham using the details below for further advice and information:

Supervisor's Name: Professor John Holford

Email: John.Holford@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisor's Name: Dr Juliet Thondhlana

Email: Juliet.Thondhlana@nottingham.ac.uk

Contact for further information

Ma Yuk Yi, Anna

University of Nottingham

Email: Anna.Ma@ nottingham.ac.uk

Phone: +852 3943 7172

The contact details of the Research Ethics Coordinator should participants wish to make a complaint on ethical grounds are: educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 5: Online Questionnaire

PhD Study: Internationalization in Higher Education - Mainland Chinese students' adaptation experiences upon arrival in Hong Kong

Researcher: Ma Yuk Yi, Anna

Participant Consent Form

Please read carefully.

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that I will be audio/video recorded during the interview.
- I understand that data, including hard and electronic copies of transcripts, will be stored and secured with passwords offline. Only the research will have access to it.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Information to Participants

You are being invited to be involved in this research study. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with other members of staff from your school if you wish. Please contact me if anything is unclear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

Aims: The study aims to enrich the understanding of mainland Chinese students' initial tertiary study experiences in Hong Kong, thus generating suggestions on how university educators could

support and ease the transitional period more effectively, and reduce tensions, conflicts and disputes between 'mainlanders' and 'Hongkongers'.

Requirements: The questionnaire will take place in October 2016. Face-to-face Interviews will be conducted in October, December, January, March and May. The interview will be based around a semi structured interview pattern and will take approximately 30 minutes. It is intended as an opportunity for you to express your experiences in your first year study: including, but not restricted to:

1) Internationalisation of higher education in Hong Kong
2) Issues around linguistic and socio-cultural challenges
3) Ways of dealing and managing the experiences faced in Hong Kong

The interviews will be recorded, and later transcribed into text form.

Anonymity/Participation: As part of the presentation of results, your own words may be used in text form. This will be anonymised, so that you cannot be identified from what you said. All of the research data will be stored in a secure place in a separate, password-protected file from any data supplied.

Please note that:

- You can decide to stop the interview at any point
- You need not answer questions that you do not wish to
- Your name will be removed from the information and anonymised. It should not be possible to identify anyone from my reports on this study.

It is up to you to decide whether to take part or not. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw during the interview or any time and without giving a reason. If you withdraw from the study all data will be withdrawn and destroyed.

I hope you will agree to take part, but please be assured that your decision to participate, or not to participate, or to withdraw at a later date, will not affect the marks or grades you receive.

If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form.

Once the thesis arising from this research has been completed, a brief summary of the findings will be made available by the researcher upon application. It is also possible that the results will be presented at academic conferences and journals. The data will be kept securely for ten years from the date of publication, before being destroyed.

If this study has harmed you in any way you can contact the University of Nottingham using the details below for further advice and information:

Supervisor's Name: Professor John Holford

Email: John.Holford@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisor's Name: Dr Juliet Thondhlana
Email: Juliet.Thondhlana@nottingham.ac.uk

Contact for further information
Ma Yuk Yi, Anna
University of Nottingham
Email: Anna.Ma@nottingham.ac.uk
Phone: +852 3943 7172

The contact details of the Research Ethics Coordinator should participants wish to make a complaint on ethical grounds are: educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Do you understand and agree to take part in the study?

- o Yes, I understand and agree to take part.
- o No, I do not wish to take part.

1. Personal Information

Name in English
Your name is used for follow-up purposes only and will not be disclosed without your permission

As we will be investigating your experiences throughout the first year, please include your email address so we can contact you.

Gender
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Year of Freshman Studies
(Date you first entered CUHK)

Province of your residence in Mainland China

City of your residence in Mainland China

Name of your high/secondary school in Mainland China

Expected Year of Graduation

(Approximate date)

Faculty

- ☐ Faculty of Business Administration
- ☐ Faculty of Education
- ☐ Faculty of Engineering
- ☐ Faculty of Law
- ☐ Faculty of Medicine
- ☐ Faculty of Science
- ☐ Faculty of Social Science

Major
(e.g. Bachelor of Art (English Studies) and Bachelor Education (English Language Education)

College Entrance Examination (Gaokao) Results
(Please state your total score (out of 120)
Other English Proficiency Examinations and Results (e.g. IELTS, SAT, TOFEL)
Please state your results for all components (e.g. Reading 6.5; Writing 6.0; Listening 5.5; Speaking 6.0; Overall 6.0)

ELTU Course(s) taken

(include the one(s) you are currently enrolled in)

- ☐ ELTU 1001 Foundation English for University Studies
- ☐ ELTU 1002 English Communication for University Studies
- ☐ ELTU 1106 Grammar for University Studies
- ☐ ELTU 1107 English Improvement Strategies for Listening and Speaking
- ☐ ELTU 1108 English Improvement Strategies for Reading and Writing
- ☐ ELTU 1100 English Enhancement for Business Studies
- ☐ ELTU 1111 Technical Communications
- ☐ ELTU 1410 English for Architectural Studies
- ☐ ELTU 1411 English for Pharmacy I
- ☐ ELTU 1412 English for Health Care Professionals
- ☐ ELTU 2011 English for Arts I
- ☐ ELTU 2012 Business Communication I
- ☐ ELTU 2013 English for Education I
- ☐ ELTU 2014 English for Engineering I
- ☐ ELTU 2016 English for Medicine I (Excluding MB ChB Programme)
- ☐ ELTU 2018 English for Science I - Effective Communications
- ☐ ELTU 2019 English for Science I - Science Research Writing
- ☐ ELTU 2020 English for Social Science I
- ☐ ELTU 2202 Language Awareness for Teachers 1: Listening and Speaking
- ☐ ELTU 2203 Language Awareness for Teachers 2: Listening and Speaking
- ☐ ELTU 2402 Academic Writing I
- ☐ ELTU 2403 Language Awareness for Teachers 3: Academic Writing

- ☐ ELTU 2404 Language Awareness for Teachers 4: Reading and Writing of Literary Texts
- ☐ ELTU 2405 English for Law Students
- ☐ ELTU 2411 Professional Writing for Socials Workers
- ☐ ELTU 2455 Expository Writing (ARTS/EDU/LAW/SSC)
- ☐ ELTU 2456 Expository Writing (ERG/MED/SCI)
- ☐ ELTU 2500 Improving Pronunciation
- ☐ ELTU 2501 Effective Oral Communication I
- ☐ Other:

2. Background

Was the subject English taught at your secondary school?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Did you enjoy learning English at school in Mainland China?

How many hours was the subject English taught each week in your secondary/high school?

- ☐ 1 Hour
- ☐ 2 Hours
- ☐ 3 Hours
- ☐ 4 Hours
- ☐ 5 Hours
- ☐ 6 Hours
- ☐ More than 6 hours

Before entering the Chinese University of Hong Kong, did you take English language courses/private lessons outside of school?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Before entering the Chinese University of Hong Kong, did you attend any English courses/study tours in non-English speaking countries outside of Mainland China?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Before entering the Chinese University of Hong Kong, did you attend/participate in any English language courses/study tours in English speaking countries such as the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia, etc.?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Hong Kong was my top choice for tertiary education.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Totally disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly Agree

Why did you choose the Chinese University of Hong Kong for your tertiary education?

*You may choose more than one answers.

☐ CUHK is located in Hong Kong which is close to my home town.
☐ CUHK offers bilingual education.
☐ The tuition fee in Hong Kong is cheaper than overseas countries like the UK, the USA, Canada, etc.
☐ I hope to go to other countries after graduating from CUHK.
☐ I only received admission offer from CUHK.
☐ I received scholarship(s) from CUHK.
☐ Other:

3. Linguistic and Social Challenges

So far, have you had any language (English, Cantonese and/or Putonghua) challenges/difficulties since your arrival at CUHK?
Be detailed and provide examples whenever possible.

Have you made any friends with local students since your arrival at CUHK?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Do you find any difficulties getting along with friends/classmates whom you have met at CUHK?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Optional: Share the difficulties you have had

To what extent do you agree that making friends with local students at CUHK can help you deal with the challenges/difficulties faced?

Optional: Share your experience

So far, have you faced any social challenges/difficulties since your arrival at CUHK?
Be detailed and provide examples whenever possible.

What are you most worried/feared/anxious about in the coming year at CUHK?
Be detailed and provide examples whenever possible.

Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire. All information provided will be used only for research purposes and will be kept confidential.

Appendix 6: Interview Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Place of Origin	Faculty	Interview	Stage
Aaron*	Male	Fujian	Art	Group	Stage 3
Alan^	Male	Guangdong	Engineering	Individual	Stage 2
Alice	Female	Beijing	Business	Group	Stage 3
Ally	Female	Hebei	Art	Group	Stage 4
Ben	Male	Chongqing	Social Science	Individual	Stage 3
Bonnie	Female	Heilongjiang	Science	Individual	Stage 4
Candice	Female	Fujian	Art	Group	Stage 2
Chris	Male	Chongqing	Science	Group	Stage 2
Cindy	Female	Hainan	Art	Group	Stage 2
Danny	Male	Sichuan	Engineering	Group	Stage 3
Dave	Male	Hubei	Business	Group	Stage 4
Eva	Female	Gansu	Business	Group	Stage 3
Frank	Male	Guizhou	Business	Group	Stage 3
Iris	Female	Beijing	Art	Group	Stage 2
Ivan^	Male	Guangdong	Social Science	Individual	Stage 4
Ivy	Female	Fujian	Social Science	Group	Stage 4
Jackie	Female	Yunnan	Business	Group	Stage 3
Jackson	Male	Guizhou	Art	Group	Stage 2
James	Male	Jilin	Engineering	Group	Stage 3
Jennifer^	Female	Guangdong	Social Science	Group	Stage 4
Jessica*	Female	Anhui	Engineering	Group	Stage 2
Jon	Male	Henan	Engineering	Group	Stage 2
June	Female	Jiangxi	Science	Individual	Stage 2
Ken	Male	Jiangsu	Art	Group	Stage 2
Kevin	Male	Shanghai	Business	Group	Stage 4
Kristie	Female	Beijing	Science	Group	Stage 3

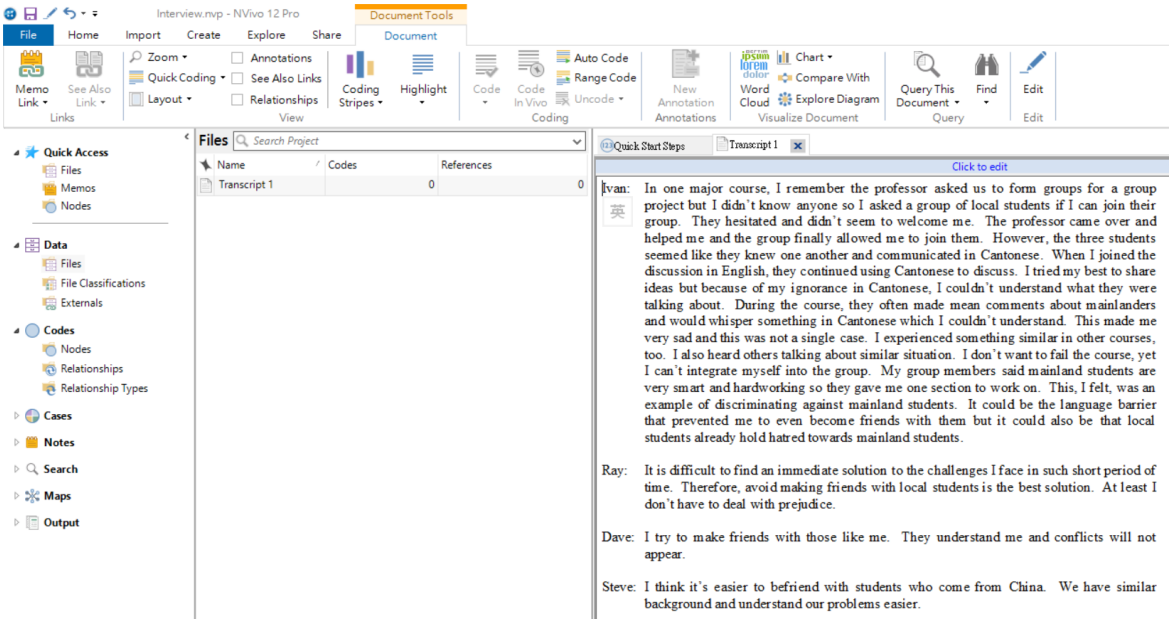
Kyle	Male	Jiangxi	Engineering	Group	Stage 3
Lisa	Female	Hubei	Business	Group	Stage 3
Lydia	Female	Beijing	Social Science	Group	Stage 3
Mike	Male	Hunan	Art	Group	Stage 4
Nathan	Male	Shanxi	Science	Group	Stage 3
Pauline	Female	Jilin	Business	Group	Stage 4
Peter*	Male	Jiangsu	Business	Group	Stage 2
Ray	Male	Qinghai	Engineering	Group	Stage 4
Robin	Male	Heilongjiang	Art	Group	Stage 2
Sandy	Female	Tianjin	Social Science	Group	Stage 4
Sonia*	Female	Beijing	Engineering	Group	Stage 2
Steve	Male	Shanghai	Science	Group	Stage 4
Teresa	Female	Liaoning	Science	Group	Stage 4
Tiger	Male	Sichuan	Art	Group	Stage 4
Vicky	Female	Sichuan	Engineering	Individual	Stage 3
Vivian	Female	Henan	Engineering	Group	Stage 2

Participants with '' took part in the extended interview*

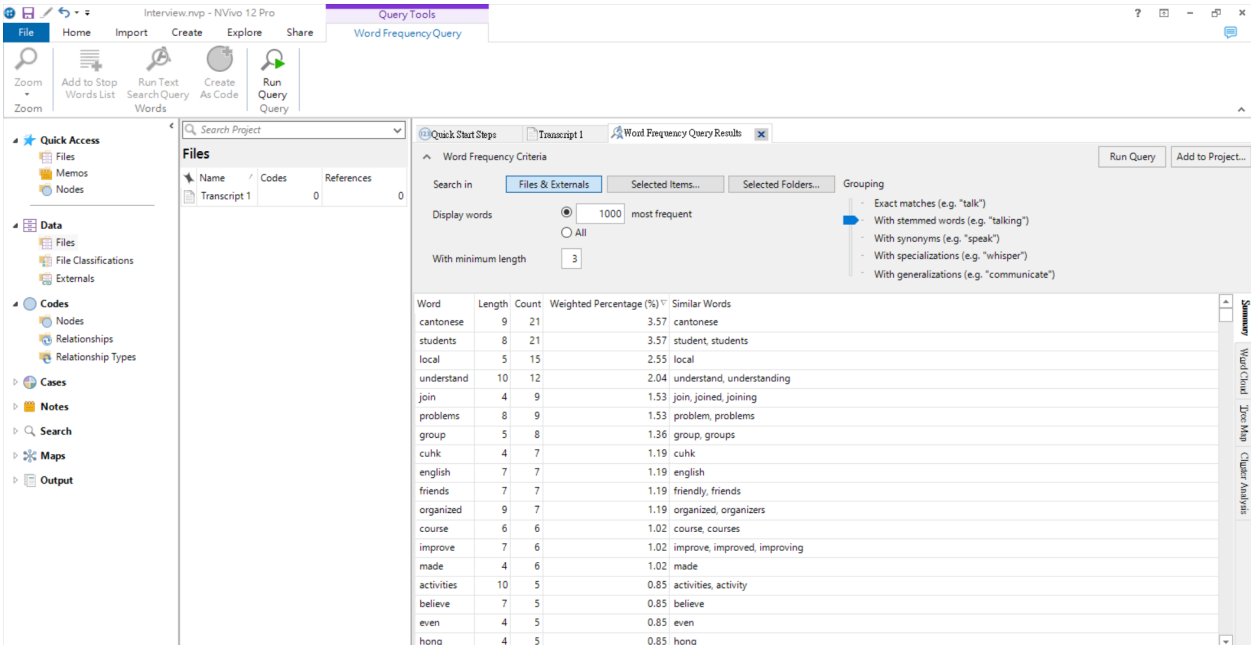
Participants with '^' can speak Cantonese.

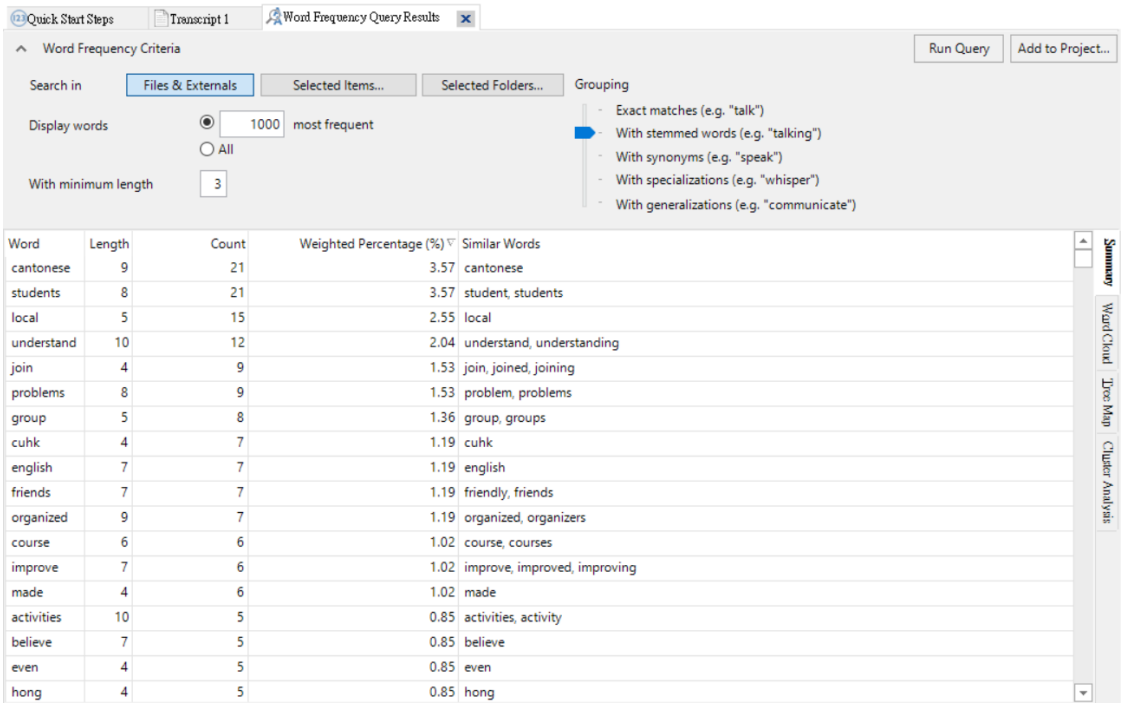
Appendix 7: Sample of NVivo Coding Data

7.1 Interview Script Transcription



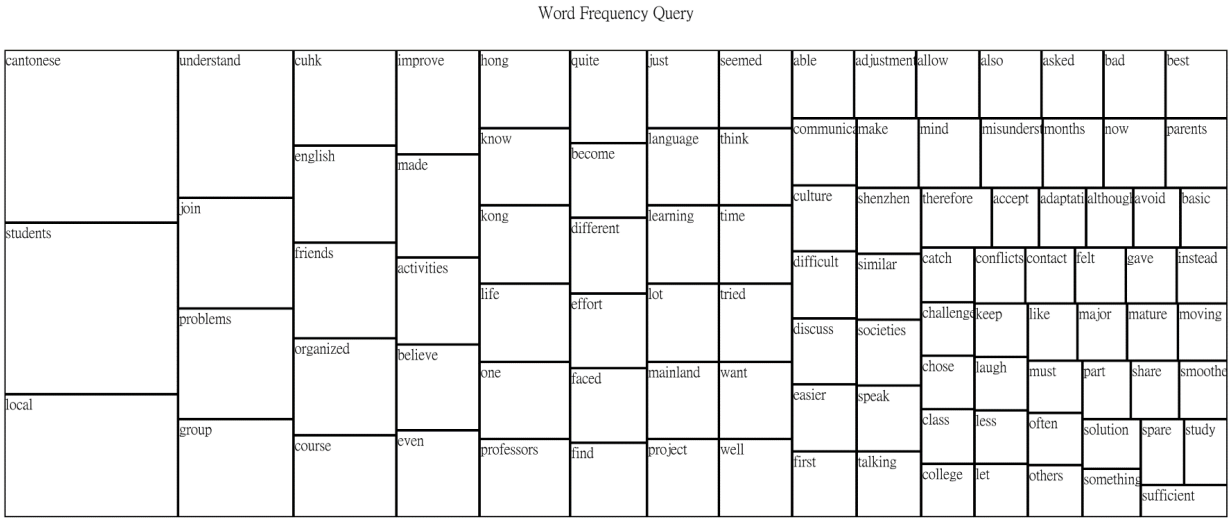
7.2 Themes and Word Frequency



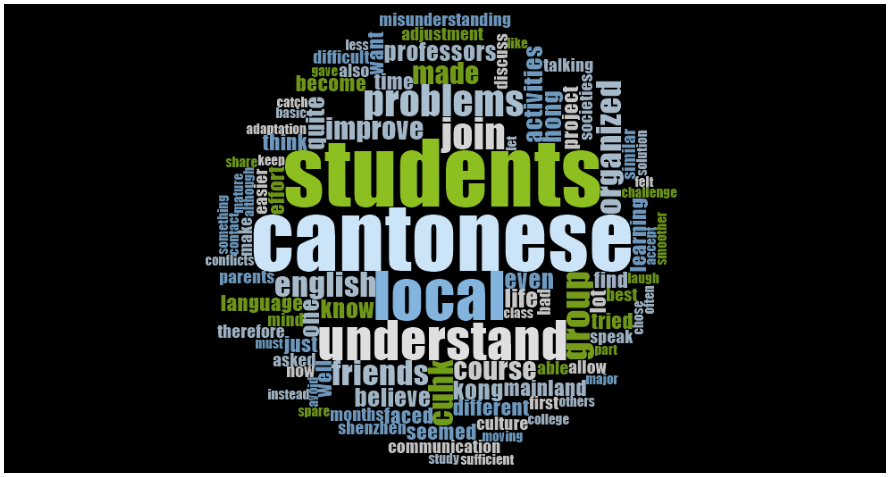


Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)	Similar Words
cantonese	9	21	3.57	cantonese
students	8	21	3.57	student, students
local	5	15	2.55	local
understand	10	12	2.04	understand, understanding
join	4	9	1.53	join, joined, joining
problems	8	9	1.53	problem, problems
group	5	8	1.36	group, groups
cuhk	4	7	1.19	cuhk
english	7	7	1.19	english
friends	7	7	1.19	friendly, friends
organized	9	7	1.19	organized, organizers
course	6	6	1.02	course, courses
improve	7	6	1.02	improve, improved, improving
made	4	6	1.02	made
activities	10	5	0.85	activities, activity
believe	7	5	0.85	believe
even	4	5	0.85	even
hong	4	5	0.85	hong

7.3 Word Frequency Query

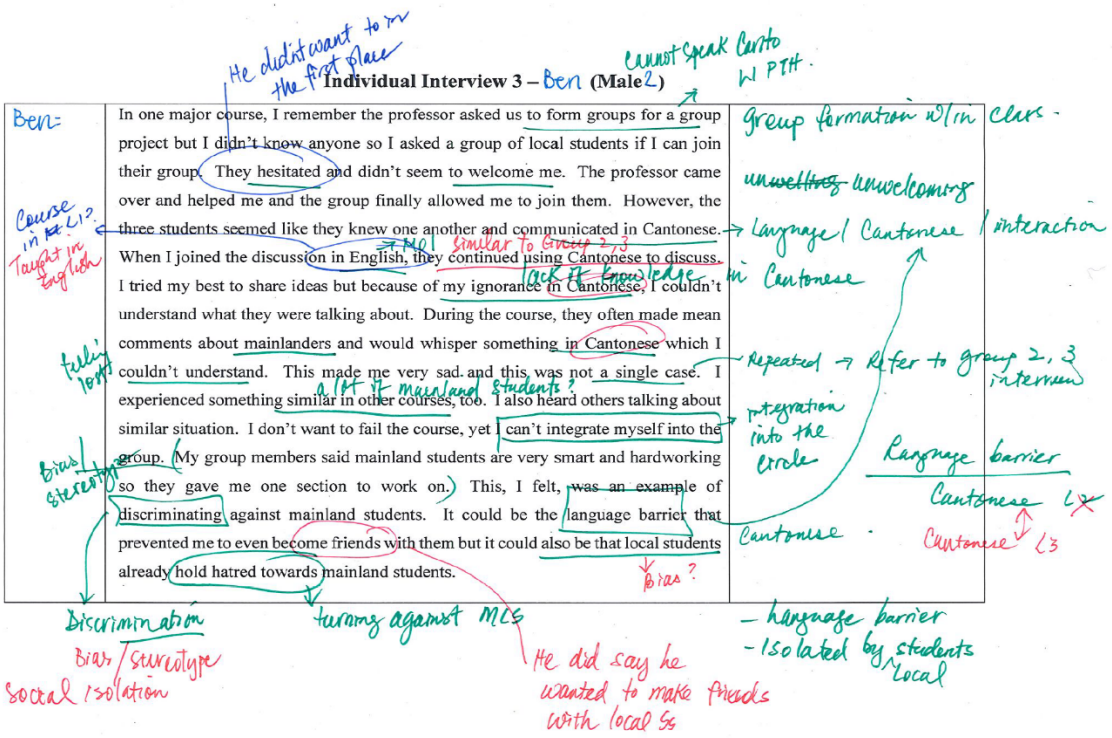


7.4 Themes


students
cantonese
local
understand
problems
join
organized
group
english
friends
course
improve
professors
made
become
activities
hong
kong
mainland
cuhk
believe
different
language
know
misunderstanding
adjustment
communication
shenzhen
seemed
faced
months
culture
talking
project
societies
learning
similar
challenge
find
life
even
tried
speak
allow
able
first
others
college
parents
therefore
conflicts
think
difficult
time
quite
effort
easier
asked
instead
spare
sufficient
study

Appendix 8: Sample of Manual Coding Data

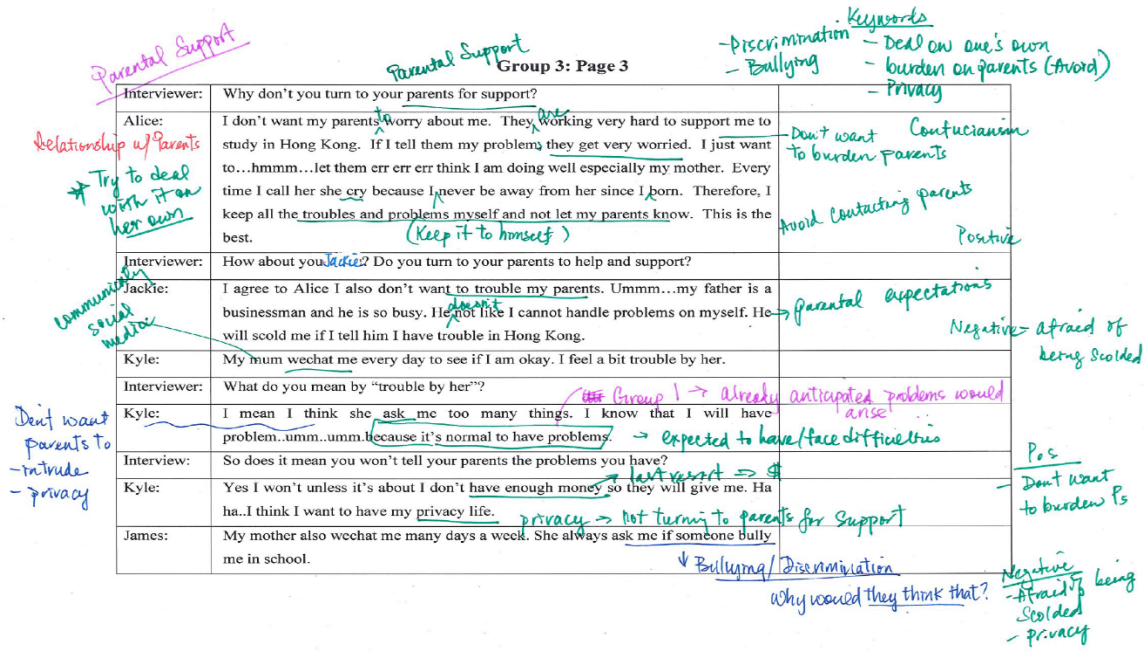
8.1 Manual transcription and coding of an individual interview



Individual Interview 3 – Ben (Male 2)

Ben:	In one major course, I remember the professor asked us to form groups for a group project but I didn't know anyone so I asked a group of local students if I can join their group. They hesitated and didn't seem to welcome me. The professor came over and helped me and the group finally allowed me to join them. However, the three students seemed like they knew one another and communicated in Cantonese. When I joined the discussion in English, they continued using Cantonese to discuss. I tried my best to share ideas but because of my ignorance in Cantonese, I couldn't understand what they were talking about. During the course, they often made mean comments about mainlanders and would whisper something in Cantonese which I couldn't understand. This made me very sad and this was not a single case. I experienced something similar in other courses, too. I also heard others talking about similar situation. I don't want to fail the course, yet I can't integrate myself into the group. My group members said mainland students are very smart and hardworking so they gave me one section to work on. This, I felt, was an example of discriminating against mainland students. It could be the language barrier that prevented me to even become friends with them but it could also be that local students already hold hatred towards mainland students.

8.2 Manual transcription and coding of a group interview



Group 3: Page 3

Interviewer:	Why don't you turn to your parents for support?
Alice:	I don't want my parents to worry about me. They are working very hard to support me to study in Hong Kong. If I tell them my problems they get very worried. I just want to…hmmm…let them err err err think I am doing well especially my mother. Every time I call her she cry because I never be away from her since I born. Therefore, I keep all the troubles and problems myself and not let my parents know. This is the best.
Interviewer:	How about you Jackie? Do you turn to your parents to help and support?
Jackie:	I agree to Alice I also don't want to trouble my parents. Ummm…my father is a businessman and he is so busy. He not like I cannot handle problems on myself. He will scold me if I tell him I have trouble in Hong Kong.
Kyle:	My mum wechat me every day to see if I am okay. I feel a bit trouble by her.
Interviewer:	What do you mean by "trouble by her"?
Kyle:	I mean I think she ask me too many things. I know that I will have problem..umm..umm because it's normal to have problems.
Interview:	So does it mean you won't tell your parents the problems you have?
Kyle:	Yes I won't unless it's about I don't have enough money so they will give me. Ha ha..I think I want to have my privacy life.
James:	My mother also wechat me many days a week. She always ask me if someone bully me in school.

Appendix 9: Ethics Approval from CUHK

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

M E M O

To : Ms. MA, Yuk Yi Anna
English Language Teaching Unit

From : Secretary
Survey and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (SBREC)

Tel. : 3943 4435

Date : 27 September 2016

Survey and Behavioural Research Ethics

I write to inform you that the Survey and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee has granted approval in principle for you to conduct the surveys or observation of human behaviour by non-clinical means as declared in the application for the following research:

Project Title : Internationalization in Higher Education

Source of Funding : Nil

Reference, if any : Nil

Kindly be reminded that you should also obtain approval from other research ethics committees within the University (e.g., Clinical Research Ethics Committee, Animal Research Ethics Committee) if any parts of your research do not fall under the scope of our Committee. Thank you for your attention.

Alice Hung

c.c. Panel Secretary concerned

Appendix 10: Ethics Approval from the University of Nottingham

2016/23/DO

School of Education – PGR Research Ethics Comments Form

The University of Nottingham

Name **Anna Ma**
Supervisors **John Holford and Juliet Thondhlana**
Course **PhD**
Title of Research Project: Internationalization in Higher Education – Mainland Chinese Students' adaption experiences upon arrival in Hong Kong
Is this a resubmission? No **Date statement of research ethics received by Research Office:** 10/08/2016

Reviewer C – Summary Form		
Date of review	7 September 2016	
Outcome of review	**Revise and Resubmit**	
	Approved	✓

Comments:

Thank you for your application for ethical approval.

The reviewers complimented you for your careful approach and attention to minimizing the low risk identified. The supporting documentation is generally in good order.

It is important to ensure there are adequate consents for research carried out using Facebook and other social media, especially if this involves access to 'non-public' material. Please make sure your students are aware of the role that FB monitoring has in the study. Even if these sites are public, given these are your own students, it is important to be open and transparent about this. If social media is being used – it needs to be very clear how, when, for what purpose this is being done.

One reviewer pointed out there are typos in the paperwork (letters to participants).

Please send an email by return to the research ethics staff to confirm you will do the above. You have approval to begin your research.

Good luck with your project.

Appendix 11: Stages of Interviews

Stages of Interviews

Stage 1 (October 2016)	Disseminate questionnaires	All Year 1 MCS	
Stage 2 (November – early December 2016)	Individual Interviews M1, F1 Group Interviews (1, 2)	2 10	Alan, June
Stage 3 (February 2017)	Individual Interviews M2, F2 Group Interviews (3, 4)	2 10	Ben, Vicky
Stage 4 (April 2017)	Individual Interviews M3, F3 Group Interviews (5, 6)	2 10	Ivan, Bonnie
Stage 5 Extended Interview Dec 2017	Individual Interviews (1-4) Engineering Business Art Engineering	 Sonia Peter Aaron Jessica	

Timeline

October 2016	Send out questionnaires
November 2016	Contact willing participants for interviews
Mid-November 2016	Individual Interview M1 (Alan) Group Interviews Group 1 (Vivian Candice, Jessica, Peter, Ken, Robin)
Early December 2016	Individual Interview F1 (June) Group Interviews Group 2 (Iris, Cindy, Sonia, Chris, Jon, Jackson)
February 2017	Individual Interview M2, F2 (Ben, Vicky) Group Interviews Group 3 (Jackie, Alice, Lydia, Aaron, Kyle, James) Group Interviews Group 4 (Lisa, Eva, Kristie, Nathan, Frank, Danny)
April 2017	Individual Interview M3, F3 (Ivan, Bonnie) Group Interviews Group 5 (Ivy, Sandy, Jennifer, Mike, Tiger, Kevin) Group Interviews Group 6 (Ally, Pauline, Teresa, Ray, Dave, Steve)
Dec 2017	Extended Interview M1 – Peter; M2 – Aaron F1 – Sonia; F2 – Jessica

Appendix 12: Sample Email Exchange

From:
Sent: Saturday, April 15, 2017 10:55:56 AM
To: Anna Ma (ELT)
Subject: Our interview today – addition notes

Dear Anna:

I enjoy our interview today. I want to add a point about what bilingual mean to me. I think I did not get my idea cross very good today.

I would say Cantonese means little to me because most of the courses are taught in English and conversation can be made without much difficulty with local even if I don't speak Cantonese. Thus the "bilingual" to me means Putonghua-English.

As for making friends with Hong Kong students, I also want to emphasis actually, I never delibrately try to make a rigid rule based on the identity to determine with whom I want to make friends. The reason why I have few local friends is simply that I didn't take part in many activities and didn't pay efforts in making friends, both for local and non-local. Nevertheless, it partly attributes to the language.

I love to help you in the future.
Regards, Ally

==========

From: Anna Ma (ELT)
Sent: Saturday, April 15, 2017 11:13:01 AM
To:
Subject: Re: Our interview today – addition notes

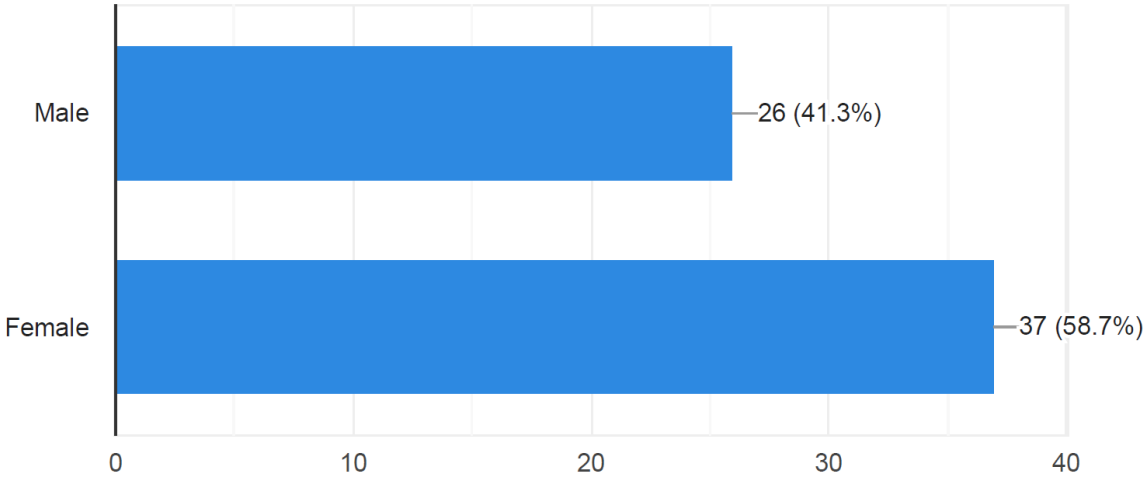
Dear Ally,

Thank you so much for providing the additional comments and feedback to me. It is very helpful.

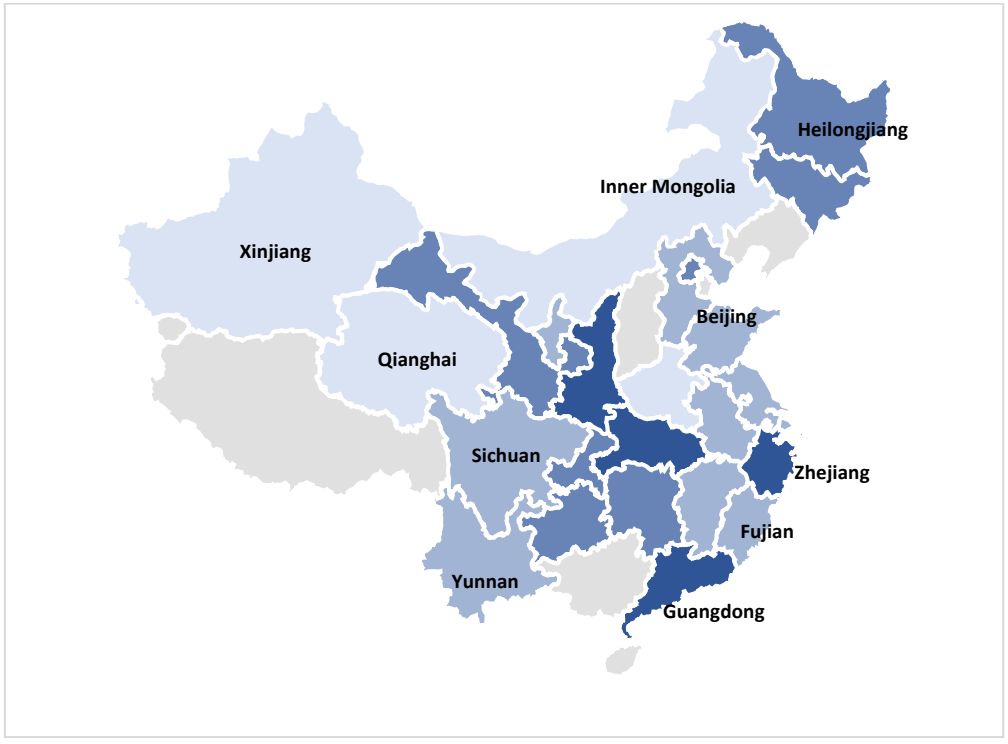
Best wishes,
Anna

Appendix 13: Demographic Information from Online Questionnaire

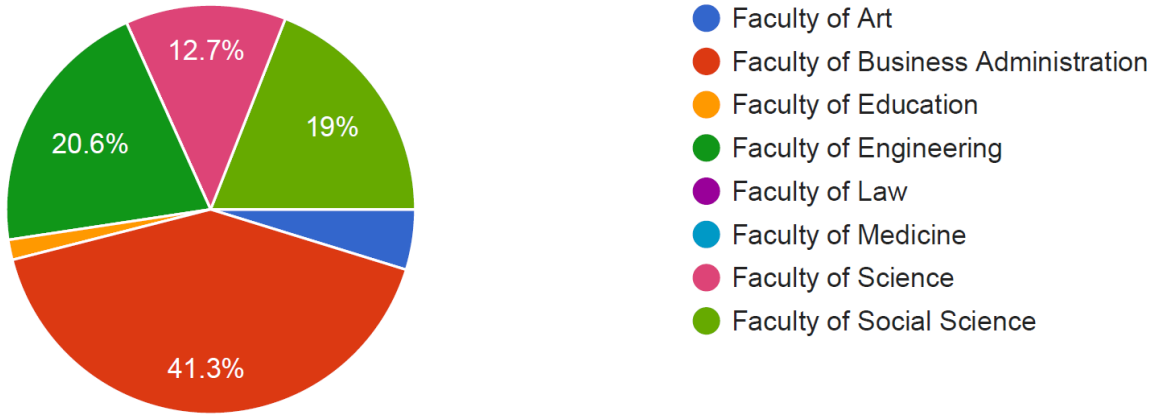
13.1 Gender Distribution



13.2 Geographic Distribution

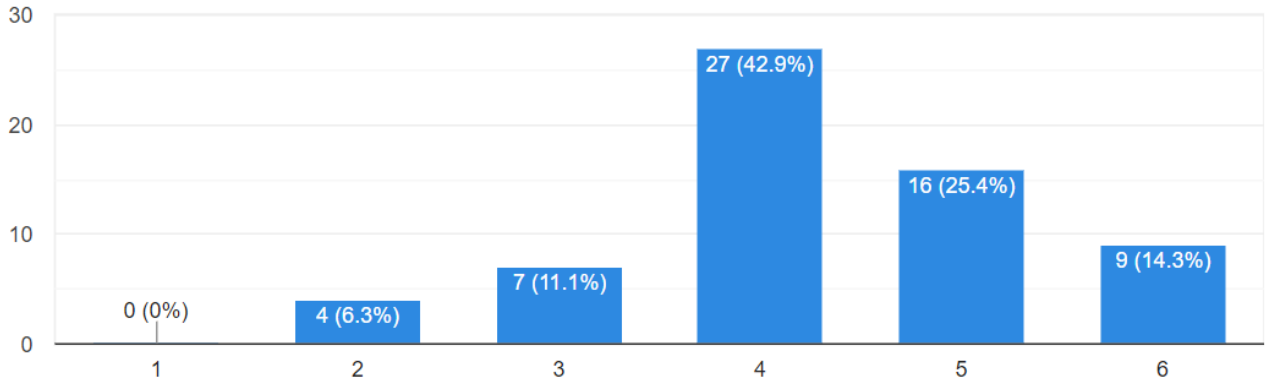


13.3 Faculty Distribution

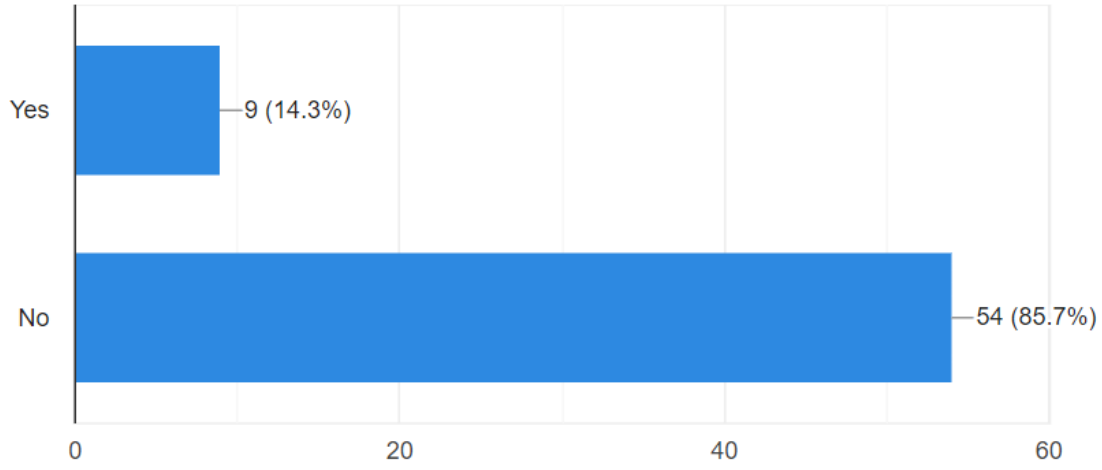


Appendix 14: English Exposure

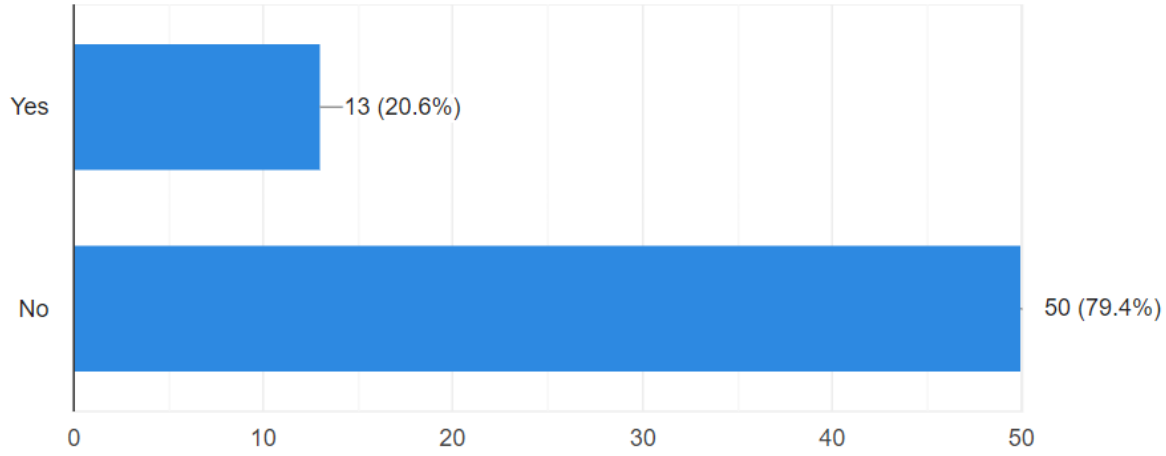
14.1 Did you enjoy learning English at school in Mainland China?



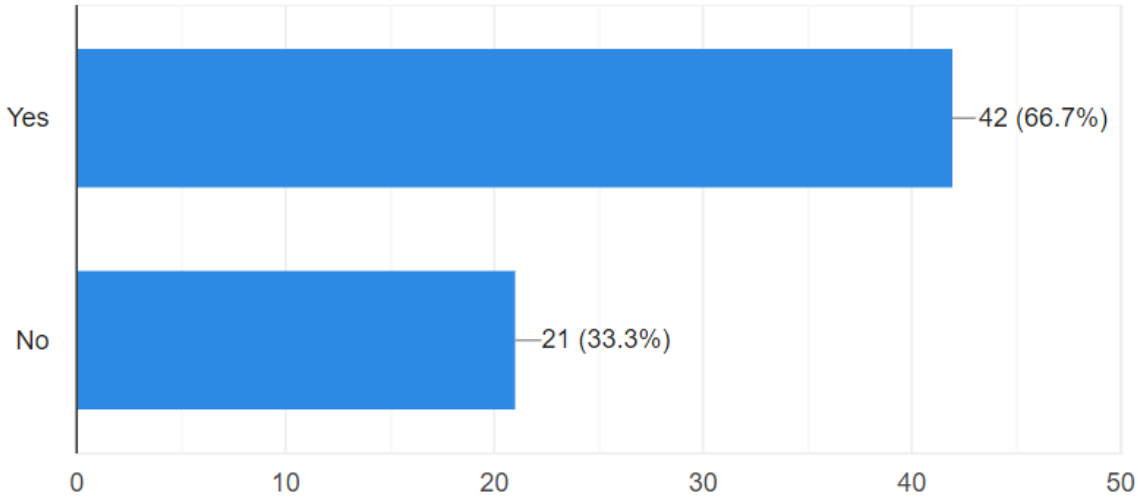
14.2 Before entering the Chinese University of Hong Kong, did you attend any English courses/study tours in non-English speaking countries outside of Mainland China?



14.3 Before entering the Chinese University of Hong Kong, did you attend/participate in any English language courses/study tours in English speaking countries such as the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia, etc.?

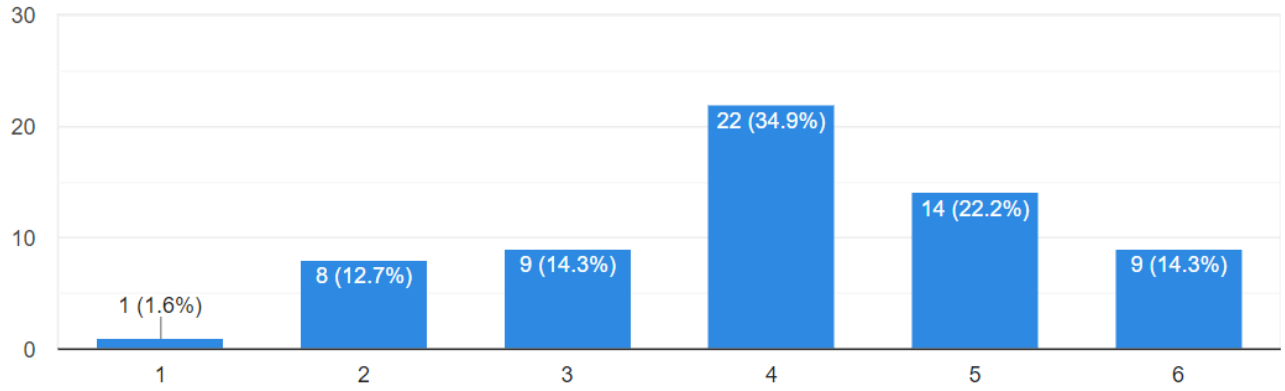


14.4 Before entering the Chinese University of Hong Kong, you take English language courses/private lessons outside of school?

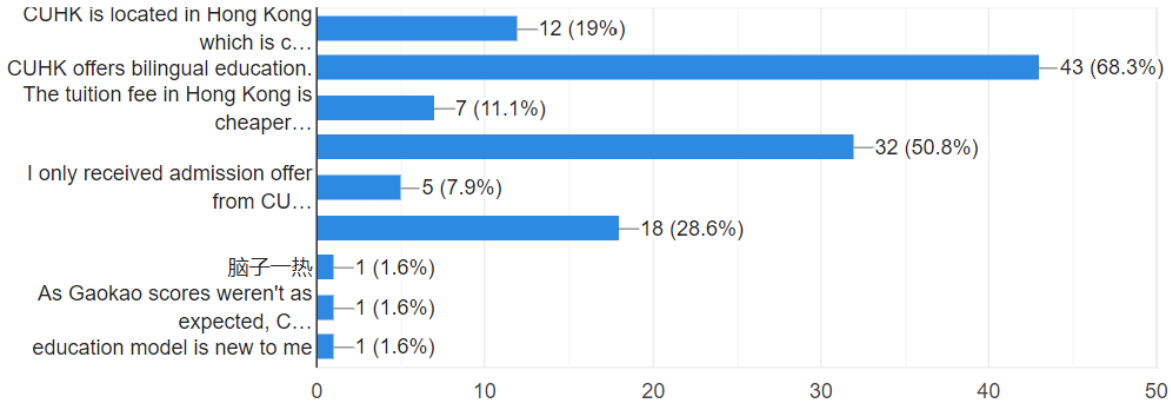


Appendix 15: Respondents' Choice for Tertiary Education

15.1 Hong Kong was my top choice for tertiary education.

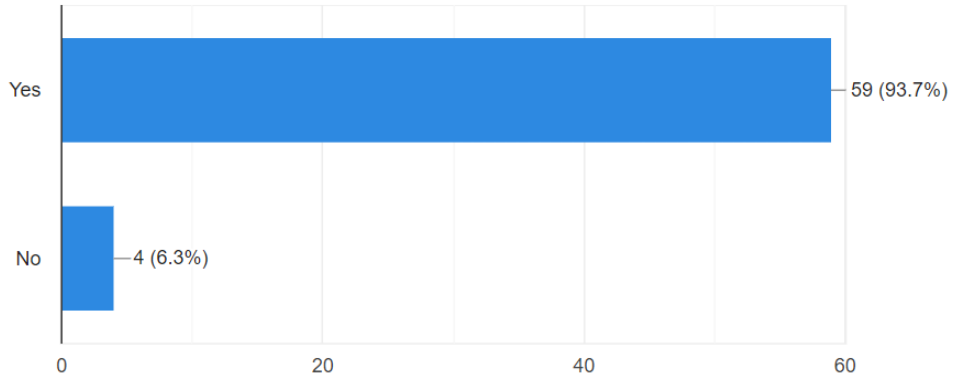


15.2 Why did you choose the Chinese University of Hong Kong for your tertiary education?

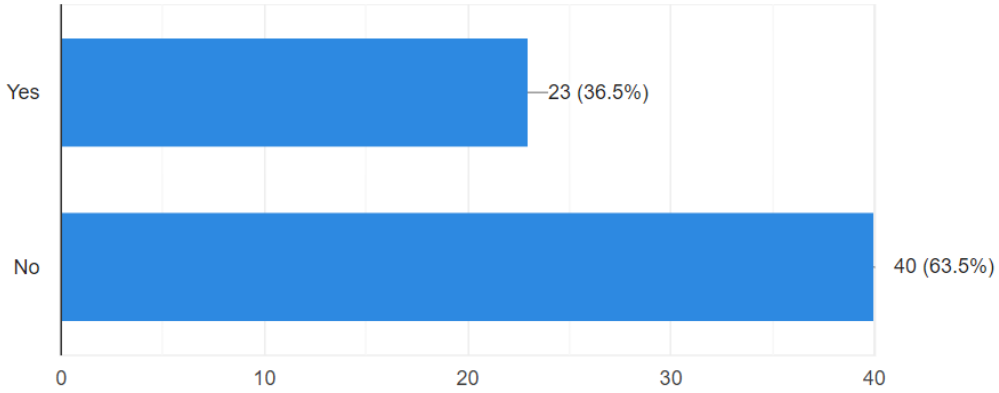


Appendix 16: Friendship

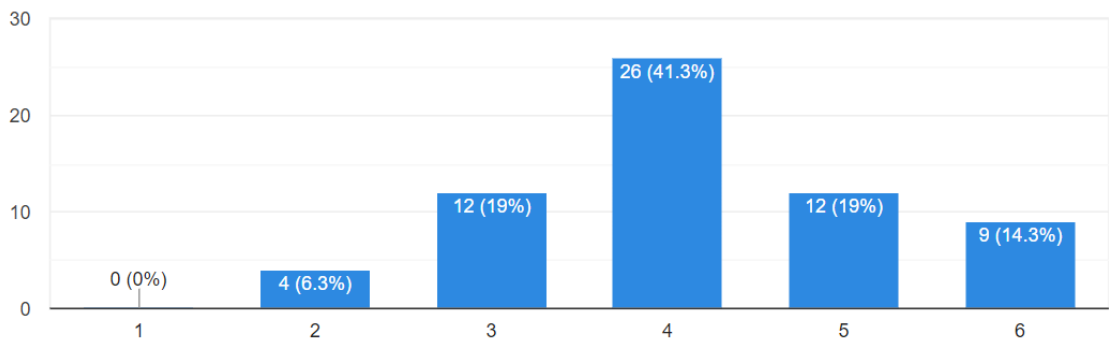
16.1 Have you made any friends with local students since your arrival at CUHK?



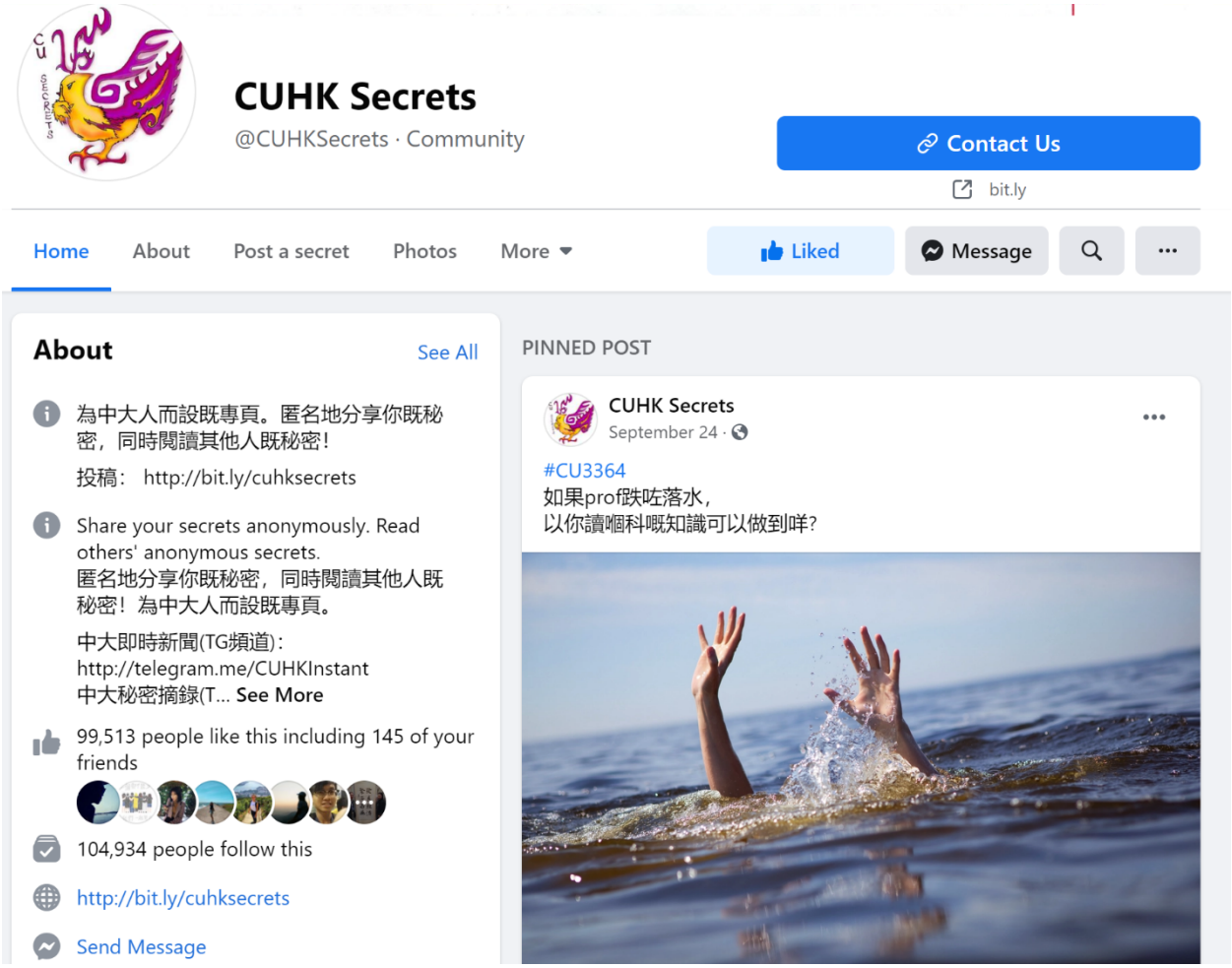
16.2 Do you find any difficulties getting along with friends/classmates whom you have met at CUHK?



16.3 To what extent do you agree that making friends with local students at CUHK can help you deal with the challenges/difficulties faced?



Appendix 17: CUHK Secrets on Facebook



Appendix 18: Invitation Email to Take Part in the Extended Interview

Dear Students,

Hope you are hanging in there at the end of the school term.

You will remember that I am interested in learning about your experience at CUHK. It is now over a year since you started, and a lot has happened during that time. How do you feel about things now? In hope to understand more about what has been happening during this period of time, I would like to invite you to take part in the extended interview. This is an individual interview and I understand that many of you are busy with final examinations and getting ready to travel back home. Yet, I do hope you would spare 30-60 minutes for this interview. Please reply this email if you interested.

Meanwhile, take care and good luck in your final examination.

Best regards,
Anna

Appendix 19: Extended Interview Questions and Notes

Extended Interview Questions

1. You'll remember that I'm interested in learning about your experience at CUHK. It's now over a year since you started, and a lot has happened during that time. How do you feel about things now?
2. Has your initial view of CUHK changed after our last interview? (This question is to see whether students will bring up the incident about the current political turmoil*).

Possible Questions (depending on the responses from the interviewee)

1. Have you noticed the pro-independence posters on 'democracy wall'?
2. Did you read the pro-independence posters on the 'democracy wall'? If so, how did it affect you?
3. How does the pro-independence issue affect you?
4. Did you attend meetings (Mainland Student Committee/Association) and discuss with mainland students about this issue?
5. How about informal discussions/chats with mainland and/on Hong Kong friends and fellow-students?
6. Has the incident affected your identity (your sense of what it means to be Chinese in Hong Kong) of being Chinese in Hong Kong?
7. Has the incident made your studying at CUHK easier or more difficult? In what ways?
8. Have you gone back home (or to the mainland) since the start of the school term? How many times? Why? When you were there, did you talk about the pro-independence issue? What was the general response???
9. Have you made any new friends (local or mainland) in Hong Kong?
10. What do you think your fellow-students feel about you?
11. What do you think your fellow-students feel about mainland students?)

Articles about the incident:

Reported by Hong Kong media

- http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/2110240/showdown-chinese-university-campus-over-posters-and-politics

- https://www.hongkongfp.com/2017/09/08/student-tore-pro-independence-posters-abused-online-hong-kong-wins-praise-state-media/

Reported by mainland media

- http://supchina.com/2017/09/07/woman-confronted-hong-kong-students-ripping-off-pro-independence-posters-cuhk-chinas-latest-society-culture-news/

- http://news.wenweipo.com/2017/09/08/IN1709080029.htm

- http://www.takungpao.com.hk/hongkong/text/2017/0909/111723.html

Reported by overseas media

- http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/poster-war-erupts-on-democracy-wall-at-hong-kong-university/news-story/53cad9af4bdb624802ff2213487d5a85

- http://vancouver.singtao.ca/1361234/2017-09-17/post-10%E7%A4%BA%E5%A8%81%E8%80%85%E3%80%8C%E4%BD%94%E9%A0%98%E3%80%8D%E4%B8%AD%E5%A4%A7%E6%B0%91%E4%B8%BB%E7%89%86-%E6%AC%B2%E8%B2%BC%E3%80%8C%E9%80%99%E8%A3%A1%E5%B0%B1%E6%98%AF%E4%B8%AD%E5%9C%8B/?variant=zh-hk

- https://www.mingpaocanada.com/van/htm/News/20170908/HK-gha1_r.htm

**Current turmoil refers to the incident that took place in late 2017.*