Struggles German Exchange Students Meet while Studying in China: A Cultural Adaptation Perspective

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Abstract

This international research study is about mapping German international students' struggles when studying in Chinese universities, applying a cross-cultural adaptation perspective. Students from Asian countries currently dominate the international student community in China. For this reason, research on internationalization tend to represent Asian students' opinions, and other voices from outside Asia are somewhat silenced. In this study, the focus is on how and for what reasons German exchange students are struggling while living and studying in China, and how their struggles in some ways may differ from international students from Asia.

The aim of this study is to map and understand German students' main struggles whilst on shorter one year exchange at a Chinese university. The findings are presented in three categories: Study life struggles, Everyday life struggles and Social life struggles. These three areas of struggles are then set up against and discussed with newer research based knowledge on the struggle faced by international students in general. Some possible reasons for why the German exchange students are facing particular struggles have been explored.

The theoretical framework combines cultural theories, cross-cultural adaptation theories and cultural differences, along with social learning theory employed analyzing the data. The study is applying a mix-method research (MMR) design, containing an online questionnaire survey and face-to-face interviews. The former aimed at mapping the struggles German exchange students are facing and how do these struggles differ from those of general international students. The latter aims at exploring the possible reasons for the struggles reported in the survey.

The main argument put forward is that German exchange students tend to struggle more than general international students in all aspects of study life, everyday life and social life, and that their struggles are a combination of environmental, cognitive and behavioral reasons.

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List of Acronyms

CNKI	China National Knowledge Infrastructure
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
ILT	Immersion Language Teaching
MEPPC	Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China
MMR	Mixed-Method Research

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1 Introduction

As an over all introduction to this study, this chapter presents the following four parts: the rationale for doing this international research, definition of key terms, the problem statement and research questions, and the structure of this thesis.

1.1 Rationale

In recent years, Chinese higher education institutions have seen a sharp increase in the number of international students. Data provided by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (MEPRC) shows that the number of international students have increased over the last 15 years (Fang & Wu, 2016). By the end of 2016, the number of international students arrived at nearly half a million, an increase of more than ten percent from the year before (Zhongguo Jiaoyubu [Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China], 2017).

Students from other Asian countries dominate the international student group in China, whilst European is the second largest group. Twenty years ago, Asian students made up nearly 62 per cent, and this has grown to nearly 82 per cent by 2013 (Fang & Wu, 2016). In 2016, the percentage of Asians dropped to just under 60 per cent, which is still very high (Zhongguo Jiaoyubu [Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China], 2017). In comparison, European students make up 16 per cent, and is the the second largest international student group (Ibid.). In other words, the European group is less than three times the Asian group. The high number of international students currently in China calls for new knowledge about the struggles faced both by long and short term international students.

Research done in China on international students is growing, but tend to consider international student as one group. This became evident to me searching in China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database, which is the largest and most reliable academic literature database. Chinese universities tend to view their international student from all over the world as one entity, which might be understandable, especially from a management point of view. As my study shows, international students are commonly accommodated in separate student apartments. I also found that short term exchange students tend to be taught in separate classes located in separate campuses.

Based on my own experience as an international student studying in Korea and Norway, I have come to understand that students with different cultural backgrounds are facing different types of struggles when studying abroad. I therefore decided it would be interesting to explore and give voice to international students in China coming from one country only. Since the European group is so much smaller than the Asian group, I decided to choose a European country to secure giving voice to those in minority. My choice fell on Germany mainly because they represent the largest number in the European group, and therefore making it easier finding participants for the survey and the interviews.

Students from Europe are generally less familiar with Chinese culture than the international students coming from Asia. It is therefore logical to assume those from Europe may have a higher risk of experiencing cultural shock and other severe struggles while being on exchange in China. As a result, they might need more and different help and attention than Asian students. However, their voice is currently too weak to be heard within the Chinese university context, therefore, there is a need to research them specifically. Expanding the current knowledge base could be useful informing both future policy development and solving some of the more practical issues, and could enhance the potential learning and well-being for all international students.

1.2 Definition and Key terms

This part presents the key terms I am using in this current study, but first a working definition of "struggle" is given.

The working definition sees **"struggle"** as experienced difficulties in a range of aspects when studying abroad. Struggle, is understood as something that bother and decrease satisfaction.

The first key term is **'general international student group'**. It means all the international students studying in Chinese universities, including students coming from countries all over the world. When published research consider these students an entity, the group is referred to as the "general international student group" in this thesis.

The second key term is **"German exchange students"**. It means the students participating in student exchange programs agreed by a German and a Chinese university.

They are registered and do most of their study in Germany, but go to China for a shorter period of time, primarily for language training and cultural experiences. The common period for exchange students in China, tend to be no more than one year, also referred to as short-term students.

The third key term is "**in school material life**"**.** Students' life contains an in-school part and an out-school part. In-school part contains their life while being a student, including life on campus and in student halls. Out-school life means the part of life when students enter the public sphere outside the regulation of their university. In-school life is here divided into material life and psychological life. Material life, as used here, refers to the aspects of the physical and structural environment, including studying conditions, daily living and socializing. Psychological life focuses on students' psychological health and emotions. In sum, 'in school material life' refers to students' studying, living and social activities on campus and in their student halls.

1.3 Problem Statement and Research Questions

In what ways and for what reasons do German exchange students in China face different struggles in their in-school material life than struggles identified in the research literature focusing on the general international student group.

The following three research questions have been developed in order to answer the main problem:

1. What struggles do German bachelor exchange students perceive they have in their in-school material life studying in China?

2. How much perceived differences are there between German bachelor exchange students' struggles and general international students?

3. Why do these struggles and differences appear?

1.4 Structure

This master thesis contains six chapters: introduction, theoretical framework, method, findings, discussion, and summary.

Chapter One provides the rational for the study, presents key terms, the main problem and the research questions.

Chapter Two presents the theoretical framework, introducing and explaining relevant theories about culture and cross-cultural adaptation. The main aspects of cultural differences and former research studies focusing on the struggles of international students' group are reviewed.

Chapter Three presents and discusses the method applied, explaining the research strategy and design. It describes, give the rational for and reflects on the choice of using a mixed-method research approach and on sampling issues of both the online survey and qualitative interviews. It also includes details about how the data was analyzed, and discussing the study's reliability and validity. Remaining limitation and possible ethical considerations are also presented.

Chapter Four presents the findings found out through the collected data in the fieldwork, including German students' struggles and the possible reasons of having such struggle.

Chapter Five discusses how and why struggles of German exchange students differ from the struggles from the general international students group, reviewing supporting and contradicting literature.

Chapter Six summarizes the study.

2 Theoretical Framework

This chapter has four sections. Firstly, a very brief account is given of cultural theories, with an aim to identify a useful definition of culture for this study. The problem was stated as: "In what ways and for what reasons do German exchange students in China face different struggles in their in-school material life than struggles identified in the research literature focusing on the general international student group." Secondly, the concept of cross-cultural adaptation is explored by reviewing both international and more recent Chinese research literature in the field. This, in order to better understand why exchange students struggle to adapt to Chinese culture. Thirdly, the cultural difference theory most relevant to this study is presented, and the main cultural differences causing struggles for students' cross-culture adaptation are identified, reviewing some of the earlier international research literature. Finally, the struggles general international students have while studying in China are presented by reviewing Chinese research literature on the subject.

2.1 Cultural Theories

There are many different ways to definite culture. The first comprehensive definition of culture was given by Kroeber and Kluckhohn in 1952, according to Lei (2018, p. 5) in his review of literature on cultural theories. As I understand this definition, culture consists of explicit and implicit behavioral patterns. It is obtained and transmitted through symbols and artifacts, and the core of culture is tradition and values. As a system, culture can be understood as the product of the activity and as such it is a determining factor for further human activity.

The following account of the development of the culture theory over the last six decades is how I understood it while reading Lei (2018). Since 1960s until today, international scholars have continued discussing culture with many different focuses. For example, Sapir (1970) focused on the historical meaning of culture, seeing it as something in relation to human life (i.e. symbols, norms, values, artifacts) that have been inherited through society. In the 1990s, scholars focused on culture as something shared by people in the same community and something that could be learned (Samovar & Porter, 1995; Lustig & Koester, 1996). At the turn of the millennium, cultural theories also emphasized that every nation/country has its unique culture providing a way of classifying and comparing nations

(Scollen & Scollen, 2000). Lei summarized it this way: “These conceptual ideas are the most representative discussions of defining culture with particular focus” (Lei, 2018. p.5).

As I see it, differences exist between the culture of any other country and the dominant Chinese culture. The idea that culture is unique in every nation/country is a useful starting point, when mapping and exploring the particular struggles German exchange students encounter when facing the Chinese culture through studying. The concept of culture is broad, including value and behavior patterns. Therefore, German students are assumed to think and behave in a particular way, which is assumed to be different from the Chinese way. When German exchange students get in contact with an environment dominated by Chinese ways of thinking and behaving, they are likely to encounter struggles in the process adapting to Chinese culture. The types of struggles general international students group have been identified reviewing relevant literature.

2.2 Cross-Cultural Adaptation

To study international students’ struggles, I found it is necessary to get familiar with the research field of cross-cultural adaption. The concept of cultural adaptation was first proposed by Robert Redfield and his colleagues in 1936. From the perspective of anthropology, they argued that cultural adaptation refers to the change of cultural patterns caused by two different cultural groups in the process of continuous contact (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). Regarding the definition of cross-cultural adaptation, the focus of different scholars varies. Gordon (1964) argues that cultural adaptation is the culture in which the individual eventually adapts and is assimilated into the mainstream. Psychologist Berry (2005) argues that cultural adaptation refers to the learning process in which individuals live and interact in two different cultures. Berry also proposes to subdivide cultural adaptation into two processes: the maintenance of the original culture and the connection between the establishment and the new culture.

China's cross-cultural adaptation scholars mostly used Searle and Ward's definition (Qin, 2017), which defines cross-cultural adaptation in term of particular skills (Searle & Ward, 1990). Searle & Ward’s definition contains two dimensions: Sociocultural adaptation and psychological adaptation. The sociocultural adaptation means the ability to adapt to the social and cultural environment of the host country. The psychological adaptation refers to the

evaluation of self-satisfaction, happiness and mental health in the process of cross-cultural adaptation. This classification of cross-cultural adaptations is, according to Qin (2017) currently accepted by most of Chinese researchers.

In 2011, the Chinese scholar Guohui Zhu (2011) expanded the definition of cross-cultural adaptation. Zhu added a third dimension to Searle and Ward's classification, called academic adaptation, which means the process of international students integrating with the host country's academic system. Current cross culture adaptation studies of international students in China generally contains the following three dimensions: sociocultural adaptation, psychological adaptation and academic adaptation.

Within the available recourse for this study on cross-culture adaptation, the focus of this literature review will be on the sociocultural and academic adaptation dimensions. The psychological adaptation dimension is not covered in this study.

Current studies of international students' cross-cultural adaptation in China are mostly analyzed along the following perspectives: value system differences, cultural stereotype and cultural distances (Qin, 2017). According to Chen (2003), the value system factors refer to the features of the Chinese value system, which can be more or less different from other value systems. Therefore, it makes it necessary, but difficult for international students to adapt. Research has identified struggles in the relation between self and group, ways and attitude of treating others, establishing appropriate distance between people, and euphemistic social expression (Chen, 2003). Cultural stereotype factors refer to stereotype on China international students may have before coming to China due to the media in their original country. It may also refer to the stereotype Chinese may have on foreigners. For example, some Chinese have a negative stereotype on Japanese due to the historical fact that China was invaded by Japan in World War Two (Yang, 2005). Cultural distance factors refer to the student's original culture, as different from Chinese culture (Qin, 2017).

Chinese culture is evidenced to be significantly different from Western culture and even opposite in many ways, whilst the cultural differences between China and other Asian countries are much smaller (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2011). Lv (2000) found in her study that 'western students' is a group containing students not only from Europe, but also from North America and Oceania. Lv argues that despite similarities across those Western cultures, they are not similar enough to justify ignoring their differences. The literature search

for the current study identified that only a few studies had focused on western students only, and even fewer focusing on a single western country. Searching the CNKI database using the keyword phrase 'western students cultural adaptation in China' provided only six valid results. This, compare to 649 valid results when taking out the one word "western". Of the six valid results, not one focused on one single country only. This is not to say that such single country studies do not exist in China or elsewhere, but within the limited time available for this study, I did not find any. Despite of this potential limitation, the result of the literature search goes a long way justifying focusing on students from only one western country.

Although cultural differences may be seen as the main reason for cross-cultural adaptation struggles of international students, other factors may influence students' cross-cultural adaptation process. One such factor is identified in the literature as the length of time staying in China. In 1998 Ward and his colleagues reintroduced the U-curve adjustment hypothesis that had been proposed by Lysgaard as early as 1955. Lysgaard argued that the cross-cultural adaptation process shows a U-curve tendency. Students staying in a foreign cultural environment for less than 6 month or longer than 18 months show better adaptation than students who stay for 6-18 months. His hypothesis is now widely accepted by the academic community, according to Ward, Okura, Kennedy, & Kojima (1998).

Lv's (2000) study finds that the U-curve for the western students in China tend to be shorter than what Lysgaard proposed. She identified the process of western students' cultural adaptation and divided it into three stages: 'sightseeing stage' (less than 3 months), 'cultural shock stage' (3-6 months), and 'basically adapted stage' (6-12 months). In the 'sightseeing stage', students adapt easily because they feel interested and excited being in a new culture. In the 'cultural shock stage', the cultural conflicts appears and the students' adaption level drops sharply. In the 'basically adapted stage', student get familiar with the Chinese culture and their language skills improve. As a result, their ability to adapt returns (Lv, 2000, p. 161-163). According to Lv (2000), exchange students staying for 1-2 semesters spend most of their time in the 'cultural shock stage', while long-term students staying for more than one year are able to enter the 'basically adapted stage'. It suggests that short-term exchange students might show lower adaptation level and have more significant struggles than those staying longer than one year. This calls for research on what in China is commonly known as exchange students.

Not only is the length of their stay important, Qin's (2017) study also indicates that student's age and their level of study can affect their cross-cultural adaptation. These two factors affect mainly the students' psychological adaptation dimension. From this perspective, there is evidence of a negative correlation between student's age/study level and the rate of anxiety and depression (Qin, 2017, p. 23, 25-26). Compared to this current study, Qin's work did not look at how age and study level might affect the other two dimensions - academic adaptation and sociocultural adaptation. As already indicated, this current study does not have the recourses to include a psychological adaptation perspective.

2.3 Cultural Differences

As mentioned before, the main reason why international students struggle is the cultural differences between their home country and in this case, China. Hall (1976) concluded from a theoretical perspective, that culture is a huge and complex system. All aspects of culture are connected, affecting each other. Therefore, it is hard to differentiate exactly how cultural differences are in fact composed, and perceived in any given location and situation. However, Lei (2018) identified four main aspects of culture differences causing the most conflicts and struggles for Western students in China. These four aspects are: value system - collectivism vs. individualism, power distance - high vs. low level of acceptance, learning culture - input vs. output, context culture - high vs. low. These four aspects and how they might be connected are explored and presented in some detail below.

2.3.1 Value system: Collectivism *vs.* individualism

Values are people's relatively fixed value evaluation system for things and the most typical and prominent value difference between China and the West is the concept of collectivism and individualism (Yan, 2007). The main features are presented in Table 1 below, based on my adaption of Davis (2001).

Table 1: Features of Collectivism and Individualism

	Collectivism	*Individualism*
Point of View	Emphasize collective consciousness, stable and consistent views	Highlight personal inclinations and change opinions
Management Relationship	Propose a hierarchical management system	Advocating equality
Attitude of Cooperation and Competition	Pay attention to the harmony between members and avoid confrontation	Encourage confrontation and competition
Group/Individual Goal	Focus on group goals and common expectations	Focus on personal goals and self-assessment
Expression Style	Euphemistic	Direct and straight
Personal and Group Relationship	Individuals have a close relationship with groups; groups greatly influence the behavior of members	The relationship between individuals and groups is loose; the group has less influence on the behavior of members.
Independence	Advocating mutual dependence, but not burdening other members	Tend to rely on self, autonomy, self-help
Interpersonal Relationship model	Pay attention to long-term, close interpersonal relationships; pay attention to the membership within the community	Short-term, voluntary, and incomparable interpersonal relationships; the intimacy of members within and outside the community is not much different

Three decades ago, an estimated 70 per cent of the world's population was living in societies showing features of more or less collectivism (Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988), with China showing typical collectivist tendencies (Chiu, 1987; Ma, 1988). The typical collectivist philosophy in contemporary Chinese culture, according to Yan (2007), has its root in the agricultural civilization history. This was partly due to the production mode of intensive cultivation and the social environment of centralized settlement. Both required working people to depend on each other, cooperating and maintaining harmony (see 'Attitude of cooperation and competition', Table 1 above). Traditional Confucian philosophy also played an important role in forming the collectivism in today's China. Confucian philosophy

emphasize that individuals can only achieve self-worth when they become part of society. It requires people to abandon inappropriate personal wills and wishes, as a way of safeguarding the overall interest of society (see 'Group/Individual Goal', Table 1 above). After about 5000 years of Confucianism, in China and some of the surrounding Asian countries, collectivism is a deeply rooted value system. Relevant examples are Japan, Korea and several south Asian countries (Rao, 2015).

Western cultures show more or less individualist features, such as promoting personal values, valuing personal interests and privacy, emphasizing individual roles and advocating a spirit of self-motivation (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). As such, it greatly varies from the dominant Chinese/Asian value system. As I read Zeller (2014), western cultures, especially European cultures, tend to be individualistic. This is because most of them were developed from an ancient Greek philosophy, which advocates debate and confrontation between people, where individuals were expected to demonstrate their strength through argumentation. The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus believed that conflict is the origin of all things in the world, and human progress lies in the competition among individuals (Zeller, 2014). Yan (2007) also argues that western cultures show individualistic features because they have a long history advocating private ownership of production and living materials. Such social norms and practices, Yan continues, tend to dominate people's lives and has led to the emphasis on personal values in the western societies.

2.3.2 Power distance - high *vs.* low level of acceptance

The distance of power, also called authority distance, is the perception and acceptance of the distribution of power by members of society (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Power distance is an important way for human beings to construct social structure. Members of different societies have significant variations in their acceptance level of power distance (Ibid.). Hofstede (1986) found that social cultures around the world have different views on power distance. Eastern cultures, including China, show a high acceptance level on power distance. Biological age, generation, work position and social status are some of the variables that influencing power distance. Interpersonal communication reflects power, authority and identity differences (Hofstede, 1983, 1986). While western cultures, including todays unified Germany, show low acceptance level on power distance along the variables mentioned above. Hofstede is arguing that these variables have only limited effect on power distance. Thus,

interpersonal communication does not necessarily reflect differences in power, authority and identity in western cultures (Hofstede, 1983, 1986). As Hofstede at el. (2010) sees it, the value system of cultures correlate with acceptation level of power distance. Cultures based on collectivist values are usually connected with a high acceptation level of power distance. Cultures based on individualist values usually relates to low acceptation level of power distance. This according to extensive research done by Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov (2010).

In terms of education, cultures with high acceptation level of power distance, such as China, emphasize that students should respect the authority and guidance of teachers. Cultures with low acceptation level of power distance, such as Germany, tend to consider teachers and students as equal and encourage students to challenge teachers' authority and question teachers' point of view (Yan, 2007). Because of this, it is common to see that teaching method in regions with high acceptation level of power distance tend to be more teacher centered (Ibid.).

2.3.3 Learning culture - input *vs.* output

Learning culture is here defined as the understanding of teachers and students on the nature of learning and learning methods, the expectation of classroom teaching, the understanding of the roles of teachers and students, and finally their reflection of these concepts, attitudes and understandings in teaching (Xia & Wu, 1999). Asian societies including China advocate input-based learning culture while Western societies advocate output-based learning culture (Ibid.).

Input-based learning culture focuses on the impact of knowledge and regulations. It regards teachers as the authoritative leader of teaching, opposing free and casual learning and promoting a particular systematic nature of learning (Xia & Wu, 1999). The core of an input-based learning culture includes analyzing and understanding the content, but tend to ignore the cultivation of ability to communicate and cooperate (Samuelowicz, 1987). Although teachers organize class activities, they do not emphasize the importance of communication itself. More so, they often regard verbal expression as a way to promote memorizing and the understanding of knowledge. Students used to this kind of learning culture usually prefer to listen instead of expressing their opinions and feelings (Gudykunst, Gao, Nishida, Nadamitsu, & Sakai, 1992). In addition, the input-based learning culture values the authority of teachers

and teachers are the absolute leader in classroom teaching (Willmann, Feldt, & Amelang, 1997).

Output-based learning culture attaches importance to the output of knowledge and emphasizes the cultivation of communicative competence (Xia & Wu, 1999). It originated from the humanistic concept prevailing in western societies. This learning culture attaches importance to the inner world of students and argues that students can make meaningful learning only by asking questions, independent judgment and by solving problems according to their own needs and wishes (Rogers, 1984). Output-based learning culture advocates student-centered teaching methods and teachers attaching importance to cultivating students' curiosity and their interest in learning. It encourages students to express their personal views, exert critical thinking, including challenging the teachers' opinions (Bruffee, 1993). This learning culture also promotes an equal relationship between teachers and students (Ibid.).

2.3.4 Sociocultural context - high *vs.* low

The high *vs.* low sociocultural context hypothesis proposed by Hall in 1976, is currently one of the most important theories to understand the value orientation between social cultures (Kim, Pan, & Park, 1998). Mapping and understanding high-low sociocultural contexts, researches can analyze cultural difference and compare regions (Hall, 1976).

Numerous studies such as Hall (1976), Kim, Pan, & Park (1998) and Gudykunst (2001) have confirmed that most Western developed countries including Germany have a medium and low context social culture, whilst Asian countries including China have a high context social culture. Hall (1976) pointed out that high-low context cultures have significant differences in the following three mains aspects: information clarity, interpersonal communication, and antagonism.

The first aspect is information clarity. Information transfer in a high-context environment is more euphemistic, but efficient. The "unspeakable" can carry more meaning than what is spoken. It requests listeners to consider what the actual context is, in order to understand the meaning of the words (Czinkota & Ronkainen, 2012). In low-context culture, on the other hand, verbal form is more explicit. Most of the information is there presented in clear language code, so the context does not affect so strongly the meaning of what is spoken (Hall, 1976).

The second aspect is interpersonal communication. In a high-context society, the value of the group is emphasized. The boundaries between any groups are more obvious, but the connection between individuals in the same group is close and firm. The frequency of communication within a group is significantly higher than that between groups (Hall, 1976). Low-context culture society values individual consciousness, emphasizing personal distance. The interpersonal ties are relatively weak, and relocation and transfer often indicates the end of interpersonal relationship with the old group (Ibid.). Usually it is easier for members of low-context society to start new interpersonal communication than members of high-context society. At the same time interpersonal relationship of members in high-contextual societies, tend to be more stable and lasting than those in low-contextual societies (Ibid.).

The third main aspect is antagonism. Members of high-context society tend to avoid direct confrontation in order to maintain social harmony. Therefore, they exert pressure on themselves, avoiding expressing anger and dissatisfaction in public. They also tend to restrain expressing their personal feelings and interests, and often they adopt what can be understood as a non-linear way of expressing their opinions (Hall, 1976). In a low-context society, people engage in direct and open discussions, based on the premise of being expected to explain and defend their point of view. Their critical communication pattern is obvious and formal (Ibid.). According to Hall (1976), members of a low-context society never fear problems and conflicts. This is because their culture values direct communication. They also believe that conflicts are obstacles in developing civilizations. Summing up, high-context society tends not to have conflicts, whilst low-context society tends to resolve conflicts (Chua & Gudykunst, 1987).

In addition to the three main aspects, Hall (1976) also pointed out other differences between high and low sociocultural contexts. For examples, high-context society members usually show stronger sense of responsibility than low-context society members do. That is because high context cultural environment emphasizes collective interest, requiring each individual in the group to be highly responsible for achieving collective interests. Low-context society members tend to adapt more easily to new environments and of being creative. That is because they are more independent and less constrained by the environment (Hall, 1976).

Applying the sociocultural context theory, it is easy to understand that people can struggle understanding each other while communicating across high and low cultural contexts.

I assume that low-context society members might have difficulties getting hold of information that is unspoken, when in a high cultural context environment. High-context society members might misunderstand that low-context society members are aggressive or appear selfish due to their strong independence and expressing themselves very directly.

After reading the research literature presented above, I have come to see more clearly that the high-context culture features share similarities with the features of collectivism, whilst the features of low-context culture are similar to individualism.

In the next part, I present the research literature on international students in China only, focusing on findings on the struggle they have when studying.

2.4 International Students' struggles

In this last part, the literature on the international students in general, studying in China, is reviewed. Drawing on Qin (2017), the findings from the literature have been classified into three parts: study life struggles, daily life struggles, and social life struggles.

2.4.1 Study life struggles

Learning their subject is the main task for students. For international students coming from all over the world to China, the aim is also to improve their Chinese language. Therefore, it is essential to review findings on international students' study life struggles, also called academic adaptation as described in 2.1. The most relevant aspects for this study are teachers' teaching, study included stress, and Chinese culture courses.

Teachers' teaching

In term of teachers' teaching quality, Qin's (2017) study identified four sub-aspects: teacher's attitude, teaching method, teacher-students interaction and teachers' consideration of cultural differences. He developed these categories applying a mixed-method approach studying general international students in five Chinese universities. Within these aspects, 77 per cent of international students reported being satisfied with teacher's attitude in class, which represent the least of the struggles (Qin, 2017, p. 16). Slightly more than 66 per cent felt satisfied with the teaching method applied and almost 65 per cent were satisfied with the

quality of teacher-student interaction (Ibid.). According to Qin's findings, the students struggled most coping with cultural differences in the teaching methods applied. Only about 55 per cent thought teachers paid enough attention to this challenge (Ibid.).

Other recognized researchers in this field are Wen and her colleagues (2014). Their quantitative study was based on general international students in Tsinghua University. As I understand it, their research provided similar results to Qin's (2017). In Wen et al.'s survey, students reported an upper-middle level of satisfaction on teachers' teaching. The teaching method got a score of 2.36 out of 4 (1 very unsatisfied, 4 very satisfied) (Wen, Chen, Chen, & Wu, 2014, p. 109). A limitation in their study, as seen from my perspective, is that the aspect of cultural differences was not included in the survey. Nevertheless, teaching method is the aspect where international students in China in general face most struggle.

Wen et al. (2014) concluded that the main reason for the expressed dissatisfaction is teacher centered classes and teachers style of lecturing. Teaching is reported as being highly depended on textbooks, the lack of student activities and teacher-students interaction (Ibid, p. 109). Research findings from Wen et al. (2014, p. 109) express explicitly a causal relationship between the degree of satisfaction of teacher-students interaction and teaching method. Based on my reading of Qin (2017), his data seems to support that causal relationship.

In sum, international students are in the upper middle range of being satisfied with the teachers' teaching.

Study-included stress

According to Qin's work, international students generally showed satisfaction close to 80 per cent on the time and class size management. This included class hours, class time and class size of their main courses. For exchange students main course tend to mean language courses and compulsory courses in their field of study for degree students (Qin, 2017, p. 29). More than four in ten felt the content of main course was too difficult, making studying stressful (Ibid.).

Based on a theoretical study, Ward and Kennedy (1999) argued that international students' language skills directly affect their communication with the locals in the host countries. They also pointed out that language skills, or the lack of, affect cross-cultural

adaptation. As I understand the literature, academic adaptation is also deeply influenced by the students' language skill.

The main reason why students feel difficulties understanding their course content is due to language barriers (Qin, 2017, p. 29). More than half of Qin's population expressed that due to language barriers, they felt they were hardly able to follow the teacher instruction successfully in class (ibid.). Zhao (2016), who conducted a quantitative study based on a survey in a university in west China, around the same time as Qin did his mixed-method study, also reported similar findings.

According to the follow-up interviews in Qin's (2017) survey part of his study, he recognized that there most likely would be a higher number of students experiencing language barriers than what the survey showed. He assumed this was because of students' lack of self-esteem and self-protection (Qin, 2017, p. 30). He also pointed out that students doing a major in Chinese relevant studies tend to have less language barriers than students doing majors in other subject fields.

Chinese cultural courses

Currently in China, many universities provide cultural courses as elective courses for international students. Such course may be compulsory for exchange students in some programs. Almost 62 per cent of international students in China are reported as being satisfied with these courses (Qin, 2017, p. 17). The main reason suggested is that cultural courses are more interesting and relaxing than main courses, with relatively little stress (ibid, p. 29-30). However, Zhao (2016) found that the content of cultural courses provided in Chinese universities are highly concentrated around the traditional Chinese culture, including traditional music, painting and calligraphy. He found no clear data supporting the notion that these aspects of traditional culture are of any great interest for international students.

2.4.2 Everyday life struggles

Getting adapted to everyday life is probably the first challenge for the large majority of international student. Managing daily life forces students to face cultural differences in a direct way. However, results based on research on general international students showed that their daily life struggles are not very significant (Chen, Ou, & Wang, 2015; Qin, 2017).

Over 80 per cent of international students reported satisfaction with the student housing provided by their host university (Qin, 2017, p. 14). They were satisfied with the following three aspects: hardware, cleanness, and housing regulations. More than nine out of ten thought the public transport system in China complete and convenient to use. Some mentioned in the interviews that taxi drivers might cheat on foreign customers (Ibid, p. 21). In term of shopping for daily life necessities, over 90 per cent of students were satisfied (Qin, 2017, p. 15). The interviews revealed that many praised the online shopping and free delivery system, finding it very convenient. However, students struggled getting hold of particular food items that they were familiar with and craved. Over 20 per cent reported such struggle (Ibid, p. 22). In his following-up interviews, Qin (Ibid.) also identified that Muslim students made up the majority facing struggles getting particular food item. Their main struggle is to find proper Halal food confirming to the required religious regulations.

Chen, Ou, & Wang (2015) also agree that international students show a relatively high adaptation level in coping with everyday life. Their findings show a positive correlation between students' Chinese language skills and their adaptation to everyday life. Only a small proportion of Chinese master the English language, making it even more important for international students to master Chinese in order to reduce struggles managing daily life (Chen, Ou, & Wang, 2015). Chen et al. (2015) also sorted general international students by their nationalities into four groups: Western, East Asian, South Asian and West Asian & African. By comparing them, Chen et al. found that western students got the highest average score in everyday life adaptation. Their score was 3.84 out of 5 (Chen, Ou, & Wang, 2015, p. 24). This is an unexpected result from my point of view, because western students are generally understood to have a larger cultural difference from China than do Asian students.

2.4.3 Social life struggles

Friendship and interpersonal communication is an important part of life that cannot be ignored in order to understand social life struggles. For international students in China, having social life communicating with local students (i.e. Chinese students) might help them improving their language skill and getting adapted to the social environment. It is therefore interesting to understand better the struggles they meet while socializing with locals.

This last section presents literature, to identify with whom the international students socialize (i.e. selection of social objects), and how they communicate with local students (i.e. equality of communication).

Selection of social objects

The findings reported in Chen, Ou, & Wang's (2015, p. 28) study confirms that most international students mainly socialize with other international students. Only about 16 per cent socialize frequently with local students. Socializing with other international students, compared to local students, can provide them with a sense of belonging; with less sense of distance and helplessness (Ibid.). A limitation in Chen et al.'s study, in my opinion, is that they did not clarify if international students actually prefer to socialize with other international students rather than local students, or because, for one reason or other, did not feel able to socialize much with local students. What Qin (2017, p. 32) found in his interviews goes a long way to support Chen et al.'s finding, that most international students tend to socialize with other international students. He also suggested that they, within the university structure, are not given enough opportunities to get in touch with local students. Most international students are in fact only able to meet local students in class and during school events specifically created for assisting them socializing with locals (Ibid.).

Equality of social communication

International students are also found to be struggling establishing high equality social communication with local students (Qin, 2017). One of the main struggles supported by existing research referred to here is that many international students report that it is hard to find a topic of common interest with the locals. I have not identified the point of view from local student on this issue in this study, although this might have been interesting!

Also, over a half of the international students reported struggles caused by cultural differences, including 'cannot understand Chinese people's humor' and 'cannot understand Chinese people's way of socializing' (Qin, 2017, p. 32). As a result, the social communication between international students and Chinese students remains a surface phenomenon. One example is saying hello without any accompanying communication other than greeting words. This makes it hard to even start building equality in social communication, and even harder to build real friendship (Ibid.). At the same time, most international students describe Chinese

students as friendly and warm-hearted when communicating with foreigners. Local students' attitudes tend not to harm the potential of arriving at equality in social communication (Ibid.).

Qin's (2017, p. 17-18) findings also suggested that besides cultural differences, language barrier can lead to struggles communicating with local students. Over half of the students confirmed the struggles caused by their lack of language skills. It is simply not enough to build equality in social communication by being able to express oneself clearly and correctly. Some also struggled, misunderstanding what local students were actually talking about. As I read Qin (2017), he does not differentiate between one-to-one and group interaction.

As I understand it, Chen et al. report similar findings to Qin. Both of them suggesting that language skills can directly affect the equality of communication between international and local students (Chen, Ou, & Wang, 2015, p. 25; Qin, 2017, p. 17-18). Chen et al.'s (2015) research also suggested that having high equality communication with local students could help international students improving their language skill in an efficient way. Both studies concluded that good language skills form a virtuous circle. Good language skills help developing high quality social communications, and good social communication skills help improving language skills. Thus students with weak language skill probably feel more or less trapped a vicious circle (Chen, Ou, & Wang, 2015; Qin, 2017).

Summing up, most international students are found to socialize more with other international students than with locals. Whilst socializing with locals, the equality of communication tends to remain limited. Most of the struggles identified in Chinese recent research literature on the general international student group have been compared with the struggles reported by German exchange students, see Chapter 4

The method used to implement my plan for answering the research question is given in the following chapter.

3 Method

This chapter presents and discusses the method used to answer the main problem and the research questions, and is divided into five parts. It starts by giving an account of and the rational for this mixed-method research design (MMR), and moves on to reflecting and clarifying why it is designed in this particular way. Then in part two, the rationale and the process of sampling for the survey and the interviews are described and discussed. Part three gives details of how the survey and the interview data were analyzed, and includes a mind map that was developed to help the analysis. Finally, the chapter ends by discussing the quality issues, possible ethical considerations and limitations of this study.

3.1 Research Design

A mixed-method approach is applied in this study. Mixed-method research (MMR) combines elements of quantitative and qualitative research approaches, "for the broad purpose of breadth and depth of understand" (Johnson et al. 2007, p. 123, quoted in Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2011, p. 285). This "composite" definition is drawn from 19 alternative meanings of MMR (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2011, p. 285). The MMR design used in this current study was determined by the nature of my problem statement and the following research questions, see 1.2. Drawing on Bryman, the completeness approach in designing the study opens up possibilities for arriving at more complete answers to a research question, or a set of research questions (Bryman, 2012). MMR implies that the gaps left by one method (for example, a quantitative one), can be filled by another (for example, a qualitative one) (Bryman, 2012, p. 637).

Yin (2009) also argues that different research methods suits different types of research questions. For example, a survey is suitable for answering who, where, what, how many and how much questions. A case study is suitable for answering how and why questions. In this current study, the first two research questions are: "What struggles do German bachelor exchange students perceive they have in their in-school material life studying in China?" and "How much perceived differences are there between German bachelor exchange students' struggles and general international students'?" According to Yin, survey data seems best suited to answer these particular what and how much questions. The third and last research question in this study is: "Why do these struggles and differences appear?" The way this last

question is phrased calls for a qualitative design. Interview as a method was judged to be the most suitable.

There are several ways to combine quantitative and qualitative parts in mixed-methods researches (Bryman, 2012). Fetters, Curry, & Creswell (2013) have identified three basic mixed-methods designs: (1) exploratory sequential design, (2) explanatory sequential design, and (3) convergent design. These three designs refer to different logical structures combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. In the exploratory sequential design, qualitative methods are used to inform a subsequent quantitative approach. In this design, qualitative data are gathered first with the goal of generating insights that are used to inform the content and design of the quantitative survey or intervention (Fetters, Curry, & Creswell, 2013, p. 2136-2137). In the explanatory sequential design, qualitative approach is used to explain earlier quantitative findings. In this design, quantitative data are collected and analyzed prior to the collection and analysis of qualitative data (Ibid.). In the convergent design, qualitative and quantitative data are gathered at the same time, but separately from one another. In this latter design, quantitative and qualitative data are analyzed separately, then the results are compared (Ibid.).

In this study, an explanatory sequential mixed-method research design is employed. Firstly, the quantitative data was collected through a survey aimed at mapping what German exchange students' struggles are and how much their struggles differ from the general international student group studying in China. Secondly, qualitative data was collected through interviews, exploring further the reasons for struggles and differences revealed through the survey.

A criticism of MMR is that it subordinates qualitative methods to a secondary position to quantitative methods (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2011, p. 295). In this study, the qualitative method was processed after the quantitative one and based on the survey result. However, the qualitative method is not considered less important than the quantitative method, because they were connected, but with different focus. The quantitative part was designed to map struggles and the qualitative part was designed to explore the reasons for these struggles. The importance of the two connected parts are equal.

MMR has also been criticized because it costs more and takes a longer time to process than other designs. Teddlie and Tashakkori argues that "MMR techniques should be used only

when necessary to adequately answer the research questions" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2011, p. 295). In this study, as identified in section 1.3, I set up three research questions in order to explore German exchange students' struggles adequately. MMR was applied for this study because these research questions called for different research methods in order to be answered.

However, the financial and time costs of processing a MMR study brought limitations to this study. For example, I was not able to collect primary data for both German exchange students and general international students due to limited recourse, recourse here understood broadly. Findings from the research literature used may not be exactly comparable with my primary data, as elaborated on in section 3.4.3. Those authors did their researches in a different time from what I have done, and the way they were asking questions in their surveys and interviews may have differed.

Having given an account of, the use of and the rational for applying a mixed-method research design, the second section of this chapter looks at sampling issues.

3.2 Sampling

The sampling process in this study contains two parts: sampling for the online survey and the face-to-face interviews. Due to unforeseen practical issues, the sampling procedures for the survey had to be adjusted.

3.2.1 Survey

In this section, the process of defining the research population, stimulating the populations size, and selecting sampling methods for this online survey are presented.

Population

A sample is a selected part of a defined research population and the size of the population influence the sample size (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Therefore, it was necessary to establish the research population, estimating its size, before starting the sampling procedure. In this study, the research population are German bachelor exchange students who have stayed in China for less than one year. There are three main reasons for this choice: Firstly, as already mentioned, Germany is the country in Europe that sends the highest total

number of students to China (Fang & Wu, 2016). They are still a minority in the international student group. However, the number of German students was judged sufficiently high to get valid results from the survey. Secondly, exchange students staying less than one year spend most of their time in the "cultural shock stage" according to Lv's (2000) classification. Thus, their struggles tend to be more significant than international students staying longer. Finally, as Qin (2017) suggests, age and study level may affect international students' struggles and the significance of those struggles. Younger students and undergraduate students both tend to have more significant struggles than older students and postgraduate students. I selected bachelor students for this reason.

In which year the German exchange students actually stayed in China I also believe affect their struggles. Some struggles which were significant in past years may no longer be significant in later years. This is due to more or less radical changes in the international students' management policies in Chinese universities. Base on this reasoning, the population was narrowed to students who made the exchange in Chinese universities in the last three years (2016, 2017 and 2018). Limiting the sample to the last three years also ensures that the findings are relevant today.

Another question that I addressed before starting sampling was whether to include students who are ethnically Germans only. Alternatively, should I include all students enrolled in German universities? I decided to go for the latter, assuming that they in their various ways were embedded in the German culture. What is more, including ethnically Germans only could be understood as being racist and therefore ethically not sound.

Population size

After establishing the research population, the next step was to identify its exact size. Due to lack of national statistics, I gradually realized that I had no way of finding it out. However, an approximate size was possible to estimate.

According to national Chinese statistics, 8145 German students came to China to study in 2016. This number includes both degree and non-degree students all levels in higher education (Zhongguo Jiaoyubu [Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China], 2017). Non-degree students staying for less than a year (i.e. exchange students) made up 52.58 per cent of the total (Ibid.). In recent years, bachelor students occupy around 70 per cent

of all international students in China (Fang & Wu, 2016). Therefore, the number of German students who fulfill both the criteria of 'exchange student' and 'bachelor student' was approximately 3000 out of 8145 in 2016. According to Federal Statistical Office of Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2018), the number of German students studying in China showed a slow increase, compare to a rather steep increase in the previous years. Therefore, I estimated the population size of German bachelor exchange students in 2016-2018 to be around 9000.

Sampling

Quantitative surveys usually requires a confidence level of 90 per cent and a confidence interval of 5 per cent as the minimum request for validity (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 213). When population size is 7500-10000, the ideal sample size should therefore be 263-265 as a minimum (Ibid, p. 215). Therefore, the ideal sample size of this current study is about 265 persons, this based on an estimated research population of 9000 as explained above.

I decided to use a probability sampling method for the quantitative part. Probability sampling methods is considered as "useful if the researcher wishes to be able to make generalizations, because it seeks representativeness of the wider population" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 225). At the outset of designing the study, I decided to use simple random sampling, as one branch of probability sampling. However, random sampling was not possible, due to privacy protection issues. It turned out to be impossible for me to get direct access to relevant students. Instead, I had to contact universities directly and ask for their help sending out the emails. Therefore, cluster sampling was the most suitable choice. This meant selecting individuals in the population by defined units (Bryman, 2012, p. 193). Exchange students from one German university constituted a unit/cluster.

To identify which German universities had student-exchange programs to China in 2016-2018, I used "suchmaschine für studiengange" (search engine for courses) on Zeit Campus website (link, Appendix 2). This search engine was recommended by German students that I met, as a useful tool to check which universities have programs in a particular field throughout the whole of Germany. Searching "Sinology" (China Study), eighteen German universities came out as providing relevant programs. Fourteen of them had exchange programs on bachelor level according to the information on their formal websites. I then did a random selection among these fourteen universities and chose five of them. I

contacted them by email asking for help sending the link for the online survey to their students fitting the population criteria.

However, the cluster sampling did not proceed as planned. Only one of these five selected universities responded. The students' respond rate was very limited. I only got 46 valid survey answers. I then decided to add all the other nine universities that were identified providing exchange programs to China. Only three out of the nine universities responded. In total, I got 132 valid survey answers, which was far from the estimated ideal sample size of 265.

To extend the size of the sample, I decided to add a snow-ball sampling method. This, in order to ensure the validity of the survey. To start the snow-ball sampling, it would have been the easiest to ask a student who had already answered the survey to introduce more persons to answer it. However, as mentioned before, I was not allowed to ask for their contact details in the survey due to privacy protection. I then started snow-balling among German exchange students in Chinese universities, and got another 97 valid answers. In total, I got 229 valid answers by combining cluster and snow-ball sampling.

There were several advantages using the website which provided online survey. Firstly, it is completely anonymous collecting no personal details, including IP addresses. Secondly, as a researcher, I set up which questions had to be answered before the survey could be submitted. In this way, I avoided the problems of non-respond questionnaires. In ordinary paper questionnaire surveys, the true amount of responded questionnaires can easily be less than the sample size (Bryman, 2012, p. 199), because the researcher has no control of which and how many questions are being answered.

3.2.2 Interview

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, this study is employing an explanatory sequential mixed-method research design (Fetters et al, 2013). The sampling for the qualitative interviews was done within the population that had answered the survey. The rational was to ensure that the interview samples are representative explaining findings of the online survey. In other words, the population of this sampling process constitute the 229 students who had answered the survey.

A convenience sampling method was used, although ideally I would preferred a probability sampling which would allow for making generalization claims. As already mentioned, privacy protection regulations in Norway did not permit me, as an individual researcher, to gather contact information from those participants in the survey. Thus, the survey is completely anonymous. For this reason, I decided to include an item in the survey asking the participants to contact me directly by email if they were willing take part as an interviewee.

There were three reasons why I assumed that the enthusiasm for participating might not be very high. Firstly, having a face-to-face interview with a complete stranger might be perceived as stressful. Secondly, taking time to write and sending an email to book date and time could also be a hindrance. Thirdly, committing to set aside 30-60 minutes, in addition to possible travelling time cost for the interview, could also be another reason not to contact me. Therefore, in order to attract more volunteers, I provided a small monetary reward for being an interviewee. As it turned out, four interviewees came forward. The qualitative interview aims at getting an in-depth understanding of the survey items; the sample size does therefore not need to be large (Bryman, 2012).

The interview was designed in terms of being an “interview conversation” rather than a structured interview. Interview conversation has a clear purpose, emphasizing exploration (Kvale, 1996, p. 126-127). This type of interview is a conversation “between two partners about a theme of mutual interest” (Kvale, 1996, p. 125). In the case of this study, the themes were the struggles mapped by the survey and the interview emphasized exploring the reasons for these struggles. The rough interview guide contained the specific topics to be covered, rather than laying out each topic as structured questions.

In this second part of the chapter, the reasons and the process of sampling processes have been accounted for. In the next part, details are given of how the survey and interview data were analyzed. It also includes a mind map helping analysis the interview data.

3.3 Data Analysis

Mixed-method data analysis are described in the method literature as "the processes whereby quantitative and qualitative data strategies are combined, connected, or integrated in research studies" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2011, p. 294). It is considered demanding conceptually to undertake a mixed-method data analysis. Nevertheless, I labeled my design a mixed-method study, mainly because there was a need for generating both quantitative and qualitative data in other to answer the research questions. Therefore, the survey and the interview data are analyzed separately, even if they to some degree are connected.

3.3.1 Survey data analysis

As mentioned in part 3.1, the survey data in this study focuses on mapping German exchange students' struggles and accounting for how their struggles differ from the general international students' struggles.

In order to select suitable ways to analysis survey data, it is important to figure out what types of variables are collected. The social research methods literature suggests that variables can be classified into four types: dichotomous, nominal, ordinal, and interval variables (Bryman, 2012, p. 336). Dichotomous variable is data that have only two categories. Nominal variable is data whose categories cannot be rank ordered. Ordinal variable is data whose categories can be rank ordered, but the distance between categories are not equal. Interval variable is data whose categories can be rank ordered and the distance between categories are equal (Ibid.). This study collected three out of four types of variables, namely dichotomous, nominal and ordinal variables.

"Univariate analysis" is the most common used analysis method, and refers to "the analysis of one variable at a time" (Bryman, 2012, p. 337). Of the methods used to analyze the survey data, this univariate analysis is applied first (i.e analyzing one variable at a time). The survey aimed at mapping different struggles, so the survey items are not that interlinked. Therefore, most of the collected survey variables were analyzed separately.

In univariate analysis, it is common to use frequency tables and diagrams to present all types of variables (Bryman, 2012, p. 337-338). Both of frequency tables and diagrams contain numbers and percentages. In this study, only diagrams are used, which are generally thought of as easier to interpret and understand (Bryman, 2012, p. 337). Bar charts and pie charts are two of the most widely used types of diagrams presenting dichotomous, nominal and ordinal

variables (Ibid.). Both bar and pie charts are used in this study, because of their different focus. Bar charts focus on showing exact numbers, whilst pie charts provide percentages (Ibid.).

Fill-in question is different from optional question, in the sense that no preset classifications for the answers (Bryman, 2012). The survey contained one fill-in question asking students about when classes start and end in general. It was designed as a fill-in question because different exchange programs may have different time and class size management. My concern was that the answers could not be classified in advance. Therefore, the answers had to be classified before processing diagram analysis, if not, it could be described by measures of central tendency as a way of describe distribution of values (Bryman, 2012, p. 338).

Central tendency are commonly measured in three different ways: arithmetic mean, median, and mode. The mode, which means the most frequent value in the distribution (Bryman, 2012, p. 338), is here used to describe the commonest class time in current exchange programs' time and class size management. The main reasons for choosing the mode instead of the mean or the median is that the mean, as an average value, can easily be affected by extreme values, and median, as the mid-point value, is unique (Ibid.). The general starting/finishing time of courses, in exchange programs may be concentrated at several different values. For example, when 40 percent of exchange programs start classes at 8 a.m. and another 40 percent start at 9 a.m., the median value is either 8 a.m. or 9 a.m., whilst the mode can represent both of them. In this case, the mode describe the central tendency most exactly.

Bivariate analysis, which is "concerned with the analysis of two variables at a time in order to uncover whether or not the two variables are related" (Bryman, 2012, p. 339) is also employed in this study. Struggles that cannot be directly figured out by one single question are included in the survey. That is because many situations in exchange programs in various universities tend to be different, and it may determine to what degree students perceive struggling. For example, students who generally start classes as early as at 7 a.m. may struggle more than students normally starting at 9 a.m. For this reason, two relevant questions were paired up. The first asking what kind of situation students experienced, and the second asking if they struggled in that situation. Paired questions need to be analyzed together.

For the bivariate analysis, a contingency table was employed exploring the correlation between any two relevant questions. It is the most flexible method in all bivariate analysis methods as it is suitable for all types of variables (Bryman, 2012, p. 341). Both numbers and percentages are shown in a contingency table. I also considered using a scatter diagram, which is also widely used to show relationship between two variables. However, it is only suitable for examining relationships between interval variables (Ibid, p. 341-343). Therefore, it is not applied in this study, as no interval variable was collected.

Another reason of choosing contingency tables method is that it shows numbers and percentages in a very direct way, for example, compared to Spearman′s rho method and Phi & Cramér′s V method. Those two latter methods are constructed in order to exam the statistical significance of the correlation between two variables (Ibid, p. 344). Contingency tables is easy and convenient to understand without particular statistical knowledge. However, statistical significance is not that important in this current study, the focus being on understanding how different situations lead to different struggles for German exchange students in China.

Coding missing data is important for conducting a high quality data analysis (Ibid, p. 333). As mentioned in section 3.2.1, this online survey does not have any missing data, because the online survey system I used ensured that only complete answers could be submitted.

3.3.2 Interview data analysis

This MMR study uses analytic induction as a method to analysis the interview data. Analytic induction, as cited from Bryman

> ...begins with a rough definition of a research question, proceeds to a hypothetical explanation of that problem, and then continues on to the collection of data (examination of cases). If a case that is inconsistent with the hypothesis is encountered, the analyst either redefines the hypothesis so as to exclude the deviant or negative case or reformulates the hypothesis and proceeds with further data collection. (Bryman, 2012, p. 566-567)

Using analytical induction, I developed a hypothetical explanation before the interviews but after having analyzed the survey data. It was formulated as: “German students learn particular behavior through the environmental, cognitive and behavior factors affected

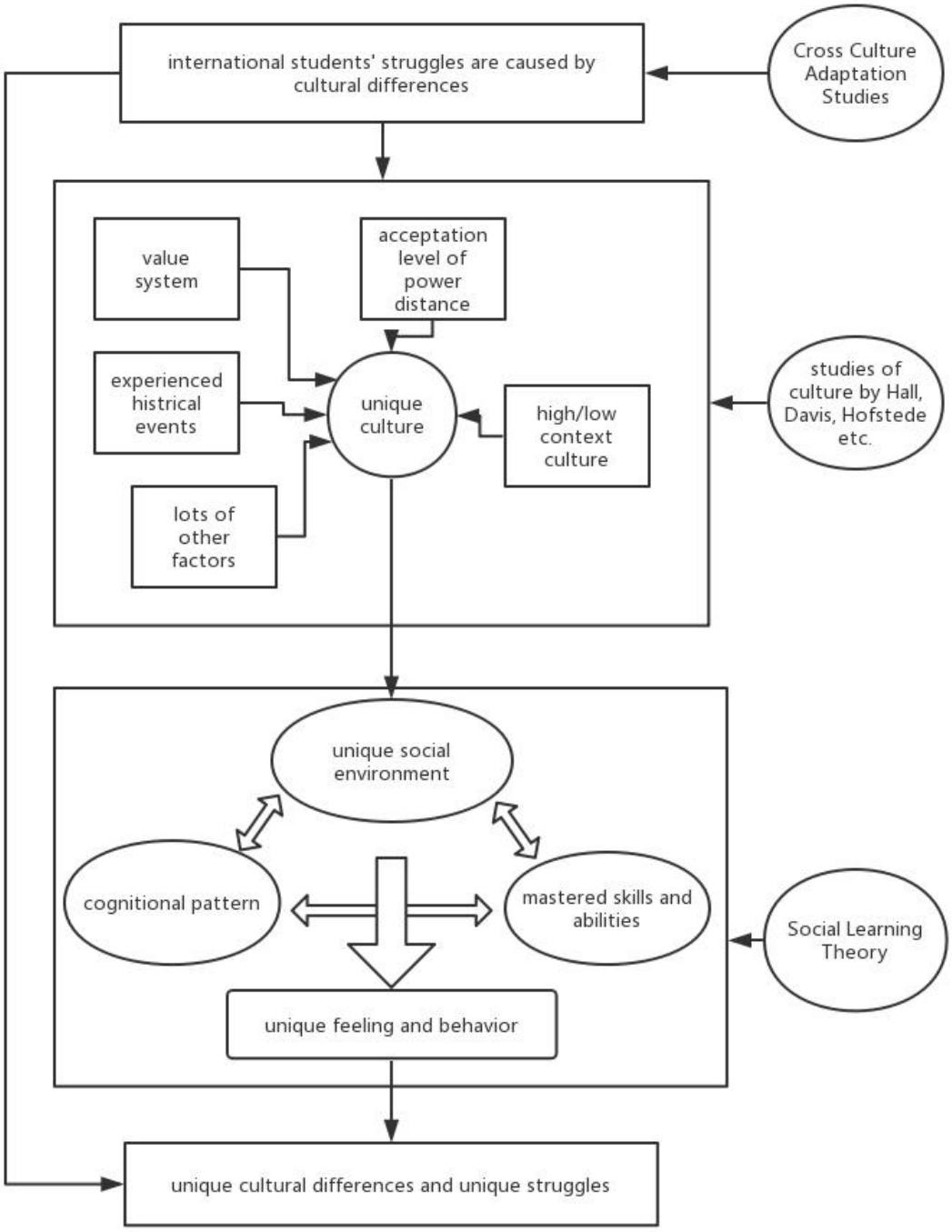
by German culture, so they face particular struggles studying in China". The hypothesis captured the perspective combining cultural theories and social learning theory.

As discussed in section 2.2, one main reason for international students' struggle is that there are cultural differences between international and domestic students, and both groups behave in their particular ways. Different cultural theories claim that culture in each country is unique (Scollen & Scollen, 2000), and that people learn culture from their community (Samovar & Porter, 1995; Lustig & Koester, 1996). As I understand it, a particular culture affects and forms a particular social environment in each country, and people learn their particular ways of behaving from this particular social environment.

Bandura's (1977) social learning theory provides a way of understanding how people learn from their social environment. He identified three kinds of elements affecting and partly determining people's behavior: environmental, cognitive, and behavior factors. Environmental factors include social norms, access in community, and influences on others. Cognitive factors include attitude, knowledge and expectation. Behavior factors include mastered skills, practice and self-efficacy. These three kinds of factors are interacting with each other, forming a dynamic system (Bandura, 1977). According to Bandura's social learning theory, the social culture in Germany (and in China) effects directly on environmental factors. Then it also impacts on cognitive and behavior factors, because the system is dynamic. Finally, all these factors determine international and domestic students' behavior.

The mind map below (see Figure 1) I developed as part of designing the study, making a graphical representation of the procedure of how a particular culture affects and partly determines people's behavior.

Figure 1: Mind map of cultural impact



Coding is the starting point of processing most qualitative data analysis (Bryman, 2012, p. 575), including analytical induction as used here. “A code is simply a name or label that the researcher gives to a piece of text that contains an idea or a piece of information.” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Coding has been defined as “the translation of question

responses and respondent information to specific categories for the purpose of analysis" (Kerlinger, 1970, quoted in Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Interview data in this study focus on explaining identified particular struggles reported by German exchange students. Therefore, the reasons given in the interviews for each of the identified struggles were coded.

The reasons for the struggles, which appeared in the interview transcripts, were first coded, then sorted into three classifications: environmental reasons, cognitive reasons and behavior reasons, following Bandura's Social Learning Theory. If any reasons mentioned could not be coded and classified into these three categories, I had to reformulate my hypothetical explanation to involve the unclassified reason into the explanation system by creating a new classification for it, until there is no more unclassified reasons.

In problem-centered interviews, the focus is on exploring particular social relevant problems (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Each problem, here in the sense of a perceived struggle, is considered a theme. Therefore, a thematic analysis method was employed. Thematic analysis is one of the most common approaches for qualitative data analysis, according to Bryman (2012, p. 578). Different from analytical induction, thematic analysis "is not an approach to analysis that has an identifiable heritage or that has been outlined in terms of a distinctive cluster of techniques" (Bryman, 2012, p. 578). The function of thematic analysis is helping to group codes, and is therefore usually combined with other types of analysis. Themes "transcends any one code and is built up out of groups of codes" (Bryman, 2012, p. 578). There are many ways to define themes, and it is usually a category identified through the collected data depending on the focus of the research (Ibid.).

In the case of this study, the focus is on explaining the reasons for each struggle, each one of which is understood as a theme. The reasons given by interviewees were coded, classified and grouped according to the emerging themes. Examples of themes are "reasons of course time struggle", "reasons of teaching method struggle", "reasons of class hour struggle". Under each these emerging themes, there are environmental reasons, cognitive reasons and behavior reasons which were coded. All these coded reasons built up the content of the theme. This way of coding was done in order to establish a clear structure for describing the data.

Having described and discussed analytical issues, this chapter ends by looking at quality issues, ethical considerations and limitations.

3.4 Quality, Ethical Issues and Limitations

Quality issues including reliability and validity, possible ethical issues and limitations are presented in this chapter.

3.4.1 Quality

Reliability and validity are two main aspects of research quality in quantitative researches (Bryman, 2012). These terms can also be used equivalently in qualitative researches (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, quoted in Creswell, 2007, p. 203). As a MMR study, reliability and validity of both quantitative and qualitative research are combined and discussed in this section.

Reliability

Reliability means "concerned with the question of whether the results of a study are repeatable" (Bryman, 2012, p. 46). Repeating, using another sample to test to what degree the results are similar, is considered one possible way to improve the reliability using quantitative research design (Ibid, p. 169). Another way of improving reliability of surveys is checking "whether respondents' scores on any one indicator tend to be related to their scores on the other indicators" (Bryman, 2012, p. 169). Therefore, I checked the indicators that were supposed to be relevant in this survey. For example, the percentage of students living in students apartments assigned especially for international students and the percentage of students who thought they were not given enough chances to socialize with domestic students due to living in separate accommodation. These indicators showed similar tendency in this survey. Using a good-quality recording equipment to record the interviews, and transcribe them based on these recordings is considered beneficial for the reliability of interview data (Creswell, 2007, p. 209). Interviews for this study were recorded for transcription. The equipment used was an ordinary recorder with good sound quality, as the type of transcription did not require a technical device with additional functions.

Employing researchers or assistants to transcribe and code the interview records, each interview being transcribed more than once, is also beneficial for ensuring a high degree of interview reliability, as different persons may have various opinions on how to transcribe and what and how content should be coded (Seale, 1999, p. 148). However, doing research for a

master thesis, I did not have the recourse to do this. Instead, after having transcribed the interviews myself, I listened through the recordings as I was reading the transcripts.

Reliability of the study also calls for reliability of the literature. The research literature reviewed and cited in this study are either from published academic literature or official documents published on state websites. Academic literature in Chinese language are from the CNKI database. This database was set up in 1998 as the Chinese part of National Knowledge Infrastructure program at the World Bank, and is considered the most reliable recourse for academic literature published in China. Literature in English are from the library at the University of Oslo, including both digital and physical books and journals.

Validity

Validity is concerned with the "integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research" (Bryman, 2012, p. 47) in surveys, and validity is concerned with "attempt to assess the 'accuracy' of the findings" (Creswell, 2007, p. 206) in interviews. In this study, there are many limitations on validity due to practical issues, some of which has been accounted for.

The first external validity issue concerned the sampling method used. As mentioned in section 3.2, snow-ball sampling method was added to extend sample size, because the cluster sampling method did not work out as planned. However, snow-ball sampling is more commonly used for qualitative research rather than quantitative research, because it cannot ensure the samples are uniformly distributed in the population (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). This sampling method is highly dependent on social networks (Ibid.). Samples selected this way may have some specific features, because as I see it, persons with similar features and personalities tend to become friends more easily. Findings from such a sample may represent limitation when making generalization to the whole population. Compare with probability sampling methods, this sampling method brought slight limitation on external validity. The second external validity issue is the sample size, being smaller than the ideal. Because of this, findings from the survey data may not be completely generalizable to the whole population.

The first issue concerns internal validity, i.e. getting the same result, is if the survey was to be repeated in the same sample group in exactly the same way. The online system of

the survey was designed in such a way that each participant could in fact submit many times. This was beyond my control, due to privacy protection regulations. I was not allowed to set up the survey so that each IP address could only submit once. This possible multiple submission may have affected the survey result; there is simply no way of knowing. The second issue concerning internal validity is the language. The survey were in English. There might be mistakes on expressing and understanding because both the respondents and I are not native English speakers.

The language issue also concerns the validity of the interview data. Due to practical reasons, interviews were conducted in English. It may lead to misunderstandings between the interviewees and me in the role as an interviewer. In this study, I decided to use so called "in member checking" in order to improve validity of the interviews (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). This involved asking the interviewees to check the coding and the findings to see if these were making a correct account of what they had meant. I sent the material to all four interviewees. Two of them responded that these codes and findings were accurate, whilst the other two did not respond. Being aware that getting familiar with interviewees beforehand, employing professional analysis software for automatic coding, and involving external audits examining the whole process would improve validity, this was not done, due to practical reasons and limited recourses.

3.4.2 Ethical Issues

Ethical consideration refers to possible issues such as sensitivity of the topic, privacy protection and confidentiality.

The survey items of this study did not include sensitive topics (e.g. religions, sexual preference, and health conditions) and the survey questionnaire was constructed in a way, so respondents were not able to bring up such topics. However, as a MMR study, focusing on struggles, there was no way of avoiding sensitive topics being brought up the interviewees. Therefore, the interviews were problem-centered focusing on the struggles identified in the survey, which were not sensitive in nature.

To ensure privacy protection, I applied permission for conducting this research from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). For the permission from NSD, see Appendix 3. The application was sent as early as in August 2018, before starting the research. In all

stages of collecting and processing data, I strictly followed NSD's regulations. The online survey and the interview were designed to ensure complete anonymity, without any personal data or IP address being collected. Recorded voice is considered to be personal data. Therefore, interview recordings were transcribed into text immediately after finishing the interviews. The recorded voices were then deleted, in order to ensure full anonymity. The process of data collection and the analysis, together with the interviewees' rights were clearly described and presented to the interviewees beforehand. This was in the form of a letter signed by each of interviewees and myself. These signed letters of consent were stored in a physical way. No digital version exists. The names of the interviewees appearing in this thesis are all fictive names created by the interviewees themselves before starting the interview. This was done in order to keep the interview anonymous. At the same time, ensuring that they will be able to identify themselves in this text, if they so wish.

For the confidentiality of this study, all data collected was stored in a device not connected to the internet. Data has not been shared with anyone, and will be deleted when this study is completely finished, i.e. when the thesis has been examined.

3.4.3 Limitations

Limitations such as researcher's bias, language issues, accessing literature and comparing are presented below.

Researcher's bias

As a postgraduate international student and newcomer to doing research, I have only gradually realized that the academic norms in Norway are different from those I was used to when studying in China and South Korea. My Asian cultural background means I have an insiders understanding of struggles studying in China. At the same time, being an insider means I have had to address any bias, i.e. black spots, I have become or have been made aware of.

For examples, when designing my study I selected and reviewed the literature primarily from within my Chinese point of reference. This I now understand represent a limitation to my study, and has to do with the different academic norms I experienced as a student in China and South Korea. I was in fact more familiar with quantitative research methods than

qualitative ones, because the former is more commonly used by Chinese academics. The ways in which I collected and analyzed data in this study may therefore be affected by any remaining cultural bias. Also the writing up, especially the way arguments are structured and presented, may be biased. However, I have done my best to become aware of such bias by continued reading and discussions.

Language issues

Firstly, my academic English skill was limited when starting my studies in Norway, as it was my first experience of studying outside Asia. I was not used to reading academic research literature in English, and even less experienced in expressing my thoughts and arguments in the western academic style. Therefore, in the early stages of this study, I reviewed mainly literature in Chinese, quoting English literature cited in those publications. Misunderstanding may have appeared when I translated opinions and concepts from the English literature, which have been translated by someone else to Chinese, and then back to English by myself. Translating back and forth in this way, might have limited my understanding, some of which have been successfully addressed in the latter part of writing up the thesis.

Secondly, my survey respondents, the interviewees and I myself are not native English speakers. The survey questionnaire and the interviews were both in English, because this was the only possibility for collecting data due to my limited German language skills and the interviewees' limited Chinese skills. The limitation of our English language skills might have led to mistakes in expressing and understanding each other, including spelling mistakes in the questionnaire and misunderstandings during the interview.

Accessing literature

My strategy accessing relevant research literature might represent a limit to the study. The first point concerns the publication date of some of the core theoretical literature, which might appear to be somewhat outdated. I aimed at selecting the original or the most cited theoretical literature, because I considered them as more reliable and widely accepted. I now see more clearly that this is a possible limitation to do with my former experience with higher education in Asia.

In addition, there are some limitation due to the absence of particular literature about some relevant aspects of Chinese educational policies, which may be linked to international students' struggles. Due to lack of access to official documents and relevant literature, I chose to use personal communication to get the necessary background information. More specifically, when visiting China in February 2019 I spoke to the Dean of Management Office for International Exchange Students at a Chinese university, which I knew before, but have no close relation to.

In addition, the lack of relevant international literature can be seen a limiting factor. A substantial part of the literature that I have used in this study is done by Chinese researchers and published in Chinese or in English. However, more international literature relevant to cross-cultural adaptation and internationalization have been included during the writing up of the thesis, this in order to place my study and its findings within a wider and more explicit international context.

Comparing

This is an international research study concerning higher educaiton, with some comparative features. However, I do not make the claim that it is a "comparative study of education". As Mallinson (1975, p. 10, quoted in Crossley & Watson, 2003, p. 17) identified, "by the expression 'comparative study of education' we mean a systematic examination of other cultures and other systems of education derived from those cultures", whilst "compare" means to examine two or more entities (Postlethwaite, 1988, quoted in Crossley & Watson, 2003, p. 18-19). However, the two entities compared in this study, German exchange students and general international students, are not equal. German exchange students is contained within the general international student group. Therefore, this study is actually comparing a section of the entity to the entity. As a "comparative study", German bachelor exchange students should be compared with bachelor exchange students from another country. However, studies based on such a narrowly defined population are rare, if any at all, in the field of international students' cross-cultural adaptation. I was not able to find such literature proving findings I could compare with. In addition, my starting point of doing this study was based on the assumption that findings of studies based on general international students may not be representative for students from a particular country, especially non-Asian ones. Therefore, I

decided to “compare” German exchange students to the entity of international students in China.

Secondly, I was comparing my data with others’ research findings, rather than their raw data, because I did not have enough resources to collect primary data also from the general international student group. From the research literature, I mainly compared my findings with Qin’s, which was the most relevant research publication I found for comparing. However, this might represent a limitation, as it is a master thesis.

Thirdly, I might have been too ambitious at the outset of the research process, deciding to use MMR and to explore a large number of variables in the survey. MMR is a research method that calls for substantial recourses (e.g. time, literature, finance, and experience), compared to using either qualitative or quantitative designs. Therefore, I met many practical struggles and was not able to analyze and discuss in depth all the findings that emerged from the MMR-data. This might have put further limitation on the outcome of the study.

Lastly, the ethnic variety in German exchange students was not a concern in this study, because the sample consisted of students who at the time were registered in a German university. It refers to the issue that the minority ethnic group in Germany may live in their own community with limited contact with the dominant German culture. For example, the Polish ethnic group may show more particular feature as Polish rather than German. Their struggles studying in China may differ from ethnic German students. I decided not to exclude anyone due to ethnicity in this study, but this bias has to be admitted.

4 Findings: Struggles and Reasons

This chapter presents the findings from the survey and the interviews, discussing the German exchange students′ struggle in the light of cross-cultural adaption context, cultural difference theories and relevant published research, mainly done on international students in China.

The chapter is divided into three main parts, the first focusing on study life struggles, the second on everyday life struggles, and the last on social life struggles. Here the opinions given by the four interviewees were presented by using a fictive name they created for themselves before the interview: Nina, Joyce, Josch and Mengna (for dates, see Appendix 4).

4.1 Study Life Struggles

German exchange students struggle both in the area of curriculum content, time, and class size management. Struggles identified in the former area include academic course content, cultural course content and teachers' teaching method. Struggles in the latter include class hours per day, the beginning/finishing time of classes, and the class size.

4.1.1 Curriculum content

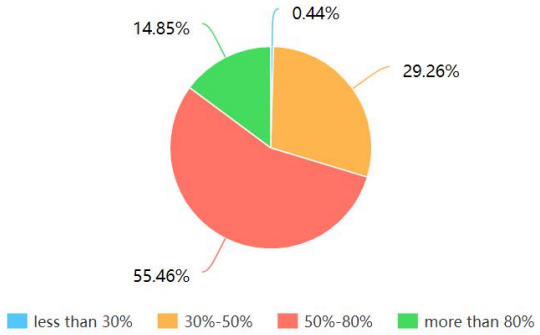
In the academic adaptation dimension, German students met different levels of struggles in both aspects of curriculum content, time, and class size management. Curriculum content aspect contains struggles about course content and teachers' teaching method. Time and class size management aspects contain struggles on class hours per day, the beginning/finishing time of classes, and the class size.

In the following part, these struggles are introduced and analyzed in detail。

Academic course content

The distribution of answers to the survey question, "*How much percent could you understand for the courses taught in Chinese language while studying in China*?" (#2-4)[1] is shown in Chart 1 below. It shows that 55 percent of the students estimate they can understand 50-80 percent of the course content, 29 percent can understand 30-50 percent, while slightly less than 15 percent can understand over 80 percent.

Chart 1: German Exchange Students Understanding of Course Taught in Chinese (percent of survey population)



My survey data may suggest that the German exchange students have less struggle understanding the course content than international students in China in general. Half of the international students in a recent survey done in China (Qin, 2007), said the course content was too difficult to understand and that they could not follow the teacher well. Qin also pointed out that based on his interview data, degree students reported far more struggles understanding the courses than exchange student, because their courses were more academically orientated. They also had courses together with domestic students, and the teachers did therefore not slow down the speed of speaking or avoid using advanced vocabulary. However, as I understand, Qin (2017) did not look at degree students and exchange students separately, therefore we cannot state as a fact that German exchange students understand the courses any better than the general international students.

In fact, all four of my interviewees perceived the situation as opposite, talking about how difficult it was to understand the Chinese courses and how their international Asian classmates seemed to understand better. The interviewees had noted, in their different ways, that the Asian students they had met, especially Korean and Japanese students whose mother

[1] #2-4 refers to Unit 2 Question 4 in the survey questionnaire. See Appendix 1 for the full questionnaire. Other survey questions mentioned in this thesis are referenced accordingly.

language also contains some Chinese characters, seemed to learn faster and perform better in class quiz than western students, including Germans. Asian students constitutes the largest group of international students in China (Zhongguo Jiaoyubu [Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China], 2017). The German interviewees said they felt like having more serious struggles understanding and following the academic courses, than their fellow international students.

It might even be that the German exchange students' perception of their learning of academic course content was lower than the survey result showed. When Qin asked international students to self-evaluate their learning performance, the proposed grade tended to be higher than the actual exam result (2017, p. 30). He suggests that students may subconsciously grade themselves higher than what is realistic, even though their identity was not revealed in the survey. This, as Qin sees it, could be seen as a natural psychological reaction. As for the reason for struggling academically, the German exchange students interviewed linked this to lacking adequate Chinese language skills. Findings from the survey support this.

Currently in China, short-term international student exchange programs do not necessarily have a unified regulation or policy. Different universities have their own regulations and criteria for selecting and managing students to their international exchange programs. The requested language skills may also vary. When asking the exchange students "*if there was any Chinese language certification requested to take part in the exchange program*" (# 2-1) seven out of ten answered "no". Among the rest the highest requested level was equal to HSK-3 in the Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (the official Chinese language test for none native speakers of Chinese mandarin) or B1 in the European Framework.

All interviewees said that in their German university, students usually had to finish 1-2 years language course at bachelor level in order to apply for an exchange program. Despite of this requirement their Chinese language skills varies, and the internal variety can be large in exchange programs with no entrance requirement. This concern all international student courses, as universities in other countries may have set different language standards. Because of this, Chinese teachers have no way of deciding what is the appropriate level/speed/vocabulary, and in that way this might contribute to the struggle that more than half of the exchange students reported facing, not understanding the academic course content.

The survey showed that three quarters of the exchange students had attended academic courses taught in Chinese only, the others had been taught in a mix of Chinese and English. Although nearly three out of ten exchange students had been asked to provide a language certificate, there is still a question if the required level is enough to ensure that students can understand university courses taught in Chinese. The HSK-3 proficiency level state that students should be able to achieve basic missions in daily life and to study using Chinese, this according to the introduction of each levels of HSK language certifications on the website of Guojia Hanban (the national institution which hold HSK exams). However, talking and discussing relatively fluently with native speakers in Chinese is a HSK-4 competence (Hanban, 2018). With relatively low language skill requirements, if any at all, some courses are taught using English as a supporting language in order to help students understand.

According to my experience, as a former Chinese language teacher for international students in China, most Chinese language teaching institutions promote the "Immersion Language Teaching" (ILT) method. ILT aims at creating a Chinese-speaking environment for students and help them learn and getting used to use the language by immersion in such an environment. Many higher education institutions do not allow teachers to use a support language such as English or students' native languages to help students understand. Teachers are encouraged to use body language or visual aids, such as pictures, as a support. Although ILT has many advantages, Xu argues that these types of support tend to be less efficient than using supporting languages, body language and visual aids might even lead to further misunderstandings (Xu, 2017, p. 5). Exchange students, the interviewees said, need an efficient and precise way of teaching and learning environment because their exchange period and class hours are limited. The use of ILT, forbidding using English as a supporting language in courses for exchange students, might therefor not reduce the level of perceived struggle.

My data identified German exchange students having experienced universities implementing an even more radical ILT method, being taught in the same class as domestic students. In the case of exchange students with limited or no prior language skills, their struggles may then be severe, as domestic students dominate the class. Compared to exchange students, this way of doing it might not be a problem for international degree students with sufficient language skills.

Fifty-five of the total 229 survey respondents reported they had experienced academic courses taught together with domestic students in composite classes. Slightly less than two thirds of those who had this experience said they understood approximately 30 -50 percent of the course content. Twelve percent said they only understood less than 30 percent. Another 12 percent said they understood more than half of the academic content. Around 3.5 percentage said they understood more than 80 percent. This finding suggests that German exchange students' struggle is more severe when attending composite classes than when being taught in academic classes designed especially for international students.

According to Bandura's social learning theory, language skill is considered an element belonging to behavior factors, which is one of three types of factors mainly determining people's behavior. Behavior factors inter-affect with environmental factors and cognitive factors because the system is dynamic. Therefore, students' language skill is affected by their environment and cognition in their countries.

The first point is that in Asian countries, the society provides students with more chances learning Chinese before going to China. As Nina said in the interview, she felt that a big part of her Asian classmates had learnt Chinese prior to doing Chinese Study at their home university, before going to China as international students. In contrast, Nina was under the impression that most German students usually just start learning Chinese after entering the university, except those with a family background relevant to China.

In Asian countries, it is common to find language schools providing Chinese. In some countries, such as South Korea, Chinese is the third foreign language, English being the first and Japanese being the second. Chinese is also provided as an elective course in many high schools in South Korea (Wang, 2004, p. 48). In Germany, it is relatively rare to find institutions providing Chinese courses outside the formal educational system. According to Josch, there might be some in the big cities, especially in those with many immigrants, but in villages, towns and even small cities, it is not possible to find any. The similarities in cultures and languages between Asian countries and China can help Asians learn Chinese language and understand the academic course content more easily. Examples provided by the interviewees, suggest that the Vietnamese student usually perform much better because they also have a tunes system similar to the four-tune system in Chinese (each sound has four different tunes and each tune has its meaning). Japanese and Korean students were understood by the interviewees, as having an advantage on the German exchange students learning new

vocabularies. This, as Nina saw it, was because their language contains some Chinese characters, which are used and pronounced in the same or similar way as in Chinese mandarin. The factors mentioned above goes some way explaining why German exchange students perceive that they struggle more understanding academic class content than their Asian classmates.

Struggling learning and using the Chinese language also reinforced the struggles understanding the course content, as reported by the German exchange students. Countries surrounding China are more or less influenced by the Chinese philosophical systems of Confucianism and Taoism, probably making it easier for them to understand certain concepts, which may be quite mysterious to others. Interviewee Mengna, who is German by nationality but ethnic Chinese, gave examples of words that are quiet unique to a language, with no homologous words in English. The words *Qi* and *Mianzi* are but two such examples. As a native German speaker, Mengna said it is sometime difficult to explain German words to Germans, so no wonder why exchange students struggle when teachers try to explain Chinese words that have no homologous words in English.

As for class teaching, teachers are usually not able to, or prepared for waiting for the slowest students to understand. Due to the time limitation, they tend to move on when most of the students understand and ask the others to inquire after class. The "others" tend to be students from outside Asia.

Cultural course content

Currently an increased number of Chinese universities are providing Chinese culture courses to international students, in addition to providing language and academic courses (Qin, 2017). I found that the German exchange students' attitudes toward such cultural courses was quite complex, especially compared to Qin (2017, p. 29-30) who found that 62 percent of the international students expressed a positive view on such courses.

There are still many exchange programs only providing language courses. Out of the total in my sample, 67 percent had been offered cultural courses. All of these attended traditional Chinese culture courses; some of them also took a course in modern Chinese culture. There are also exchange programs providing cultural courses such as Chinese society

and politics, Chinese history, Chinese literature and Chinese economy, but they seem to be relatively rare.

The cultural course provided in most exchange programs tend to talk about traditional Chinese culture, but among the students who had traditional Chinese culture courses, only 17 out of 154 thought them 'very interesting', 81 rated those courses as 'interesting'. The remaining 56 students said they felt the courses were 'boring' or 'very boring'. German exchange students' satisfaction is similar, or slightly higher, compared to that of the international students' as reported by Qin (2017, p. 29-30). Compared to the traditional culture courses, the modern Chinese culture courses came out more positively. Forty-one out of 58 students thought it 'very interesting', 16 though it 'interesting' and only one student thought it 'boring'. In other words, the German exchange students in my sample showed a much higher interest in modern Chinese culture courses compared to the traditional ones. This is set against the current trend of providing traditional culture courses for all international students in China. I have not been able to identify any reliable data to find out if the same tendency applies to the composite group containing all international students in China.

In the following, the focus is on exploring the reasons why the German exchange students clearly show less interest in learning traditional Chinese culture than learning modern Chinese culture. From Mengna's point of view, the most important reason why German students feel that traditional Chinese culture courses are not so interesting is the difficulty understanding its content. She pointed out that some traditional cultural patterns are unique and extremely difficult for foreigners to grasp. Especially for those who do not have any prior knowledge of Confucianism, Taoism and the system of ancient Chinese mythology. Teaching traditional Chinese culture involves introducing and explaining these traditional and ancient cultural patterns and concepts. It is even hard for Mengna to explain these concepts and patterns in German for other fellow exchange students, to say nothing of explaining them in Chinese, for those whose native language is not Chinese. Her observation goes some way explaining why Asian students, with their cognitive cultural patters and prior knowledge on these types of cultural features, may take a higher interested in traditional Chinese culture courses.

The other interviewees shared Mengna's view on this issue. Joyce attended a traditional Chinese music as her cultural course, and said that listening to a different style of

music, and looking and playing instruments she had never seen before, was interesting. However, the part were the teacher introduced why the Chinese traditional music instruments were created differently than the western ones used in orchestras, and how the Chinese approach to evaluating the standard and beauty of the music, was too difficult to understand. This, as Joyce saw it, made the traditional cultural course less interesting than expected.

Josch attended a Chinese traditional calligraphy course, and as a typical German student, he had no prior experience or knowledge. He said that because soft pen calligraphy is very different from using a hard pen, students whose original country does not have any history of using soft pens find it extremely hard to understand the evaluation criteria of Chinese soft pen calligraphy. In his experience, the teacher was not able to explain it clearly without using the proper nouns belonging to the field of calligraphy. In the end, the teacher gave up explaining and just gave them paper, ink and soft pens to let them follow and copy his own calligraphy. The course was all about copying the teacher and became very boring. As Josch saw it, these were the main reasons why German exchange students without such prior cultural knowledge, struggled.

Another reason why German students showed less interest in traditional Chinese culture course is the feeling that traditional culture is too far removed from the current situation of China and therefore somewhat irrelevant to the real world. Mengna, as ethnic Chinese brought up in Germany, said she felt proud of the long history and the unique beauties of traditional Chinese culture. Therefore, she would like to introduce it to foreigners. As a German by nationality, she also admitted that for most of German students, their motivations of going on exchange to China were to experience todays China and improve their language skills. Some of them may also, as she understood it, be motivated by the prospect of doing business or find a relevant job in China in the future. Only rarely had anyone she had encountered showed any interested in studying for the sake of doing academic researches on traditional Chinese culture. As Mengna saw it, they cared more about how China is today and how China will be in the future, rather than of how China was in the past. Moreover, Josch pointed out that he felt that the teachers of culture course knew less about how to teach and communicate with international students than the teachers of language courses. He admitted feeling that these teachers lacked the necessary teaching skills required teaching cultural courses for exchange students.

In a personal communication February 22, 2019, the Dean of Management Office for International Exchange Students at an unnamed Chinese University [2], had this to say: For most cultural courses, university teachers are selected for their specific knowledge in their majors, such as traditional music, traditional painting and soft pen calligraphy. They know more about their field of art than subject didactics and the pedagogy required teaching international students. Many university teachers also feel helpless while facing international students with limited Chinese language skills. The Dean also mentioned that cultural course teachers are now being trained in China, and that the situation will improve in the near future.

Teaching methods

Adapting to teachers' teaching method was one of the most significant struggles faced by the German exchange students, with as many as six in ten struggling. This finding is in sharp contrast to what Qin found in his survey where nearly seven in ten rated their experience as satisfactory (Qin, 2017, p. 16). The German exchange students' struggles concentrated on feeling the teaching method being too teacher centered, lack of learning activities and limited chances of expressing opinions. Almost 58 percent agreed with the statement: "*It is too lecture style and teacher-central. I'd like to have more activities and chances to talk*" (#2-13-A). No one had ticked the statement: "*There were too much activities. I'd like to get more knowledge from the teacher instead of spending time on group works or talking.*" (# 2-13-B). The remaining dissatisfied four students, adding up to under two percent of the sample, chose "*Other opinion*" explaining that the teaching method applied varies from teacher to teachers.

All four interviewees said that the teaching method in Germany is much more student centered than they experienced in China, so the feeling of struggle did not come as a surprise. Germany and China are, as described in Chapter 2, located on each end of the continuum in all aspects of individualism vs. collectivism (Davis, 2001), high vs. low acceptation of power distance (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010), learning culture based on output vs. input (Xia & Wu, 1999), and high vs. low context culture (Hall, 1976).

[2] Name of this Dean and the university she is working in were anonymous according to her request, concerning potential negative impact on her work position. She is referred to as "the Dean" throughout this thesis.

All of these factors affect both teachers′ and students′ cognition, resulting in completely different teaching and learning environments in two countries. It is therefore understandable and predictable that German exchange students to China struggle. They have been exposed, for most of their lives, to the German individualistic culture marked with low acceptation level of power distance and a learning culture based on output, and find it hard to accept the teacher as the authority and leader of the class. They also struggle with course design with predefined knowledge, without the possibility to discuss or practice.

Opinions expressed by the interviewees also show clear cognitional differences due to these cultural differences. As Joyce said, improving language skill is an important target of all exchange students. Good language skills mean you can express your opinion clearly, but the lecture style used in most courses provide little chance to talk. Most of the chances talking were just repeating newly learned sentences and vocabularies. Joyce said that she did not think of this learning environment as very efficient in helping her to use Chinese to express opinions in real life. The model of language learning based on input in China is focusing on remembering vocabularies, practicing correct grammar and correct pronunciation. The idea is that when you have enough vocabulary and you are able to organize them grammatically, then you will naturally be able to say whatever you want and express your opinions (Xia & Wu, 1999).

Asian students are familiar with an input-based learning culture, with thoughts consistent with the Chinese teacher'. It is therefore understandable that the Asian international student accept the dominant teacher centered method more easily than e.g. the German exchange students did. As Mengna said, Chinese domestic students and Asian international students usually judge teachers' teaching method and teaching ability according to how they can explain and convey new knowledge clearly, accurately and efficiently. On the other hand, German exchange students pay more attention to how well courses are organized.

Any given dominant culture affects students and teachers' cognition, as seen from a social learning perspective. Answering the choice questions in online surveys, it is quite understandable that respondents tended to simply choose one opinion rather than choosing "others" and not to provide an explanatory sentence unless the issue is perceived as very significant. As already mentioned, four of the respondents chose '*Other opinion*', pointing out that the teaching method depended on the teacher. Older teachers were usually very lecture

style and teacher centered, whilst younger teachers were describes as more open to alternative teaching styles. Joyce and Mengna both expressed similar views during the interview.

In the later 1980s, educational policy makers in China realized that the western style learning culture based on output had advantages when cultivating students' ability for independent thinking and self-learning (Xia & Wu, 1999). Consequently, there were many programs focusing on contributing to student-centered methods, reducing the power-gap between teachers and students. Xia and Wu also pointed out that is easy to understand that younger teachers, who experienced these reforms during their own education and teacher training period, show a more student-centered approach when teaching.

The cognitive patterns of traditional teacher-centered learning culture also goes a long way explaining why some Chinese teachers avoid open learning activities without standard answers, or why they seem to fail when and if trying. Josch said that some teachers were trying hard to hold activities and discussions, but that they were not good at organizing it. As he had experienced attending cultural classes, it looked as if the teachers operated with a set of pre-set and predictable answers. Teachers, Josch said, looked quite helpless in their reactions towards students' original and unpredicted opinions.

From a social learning perspective, it is quite likely that due to their established cognitive patterns teachers tend to dominate the class, keeping everything under control. They may subconsciously feel awkward and guilty when the activity get "out of control", with unexpected opinions being expressed. Current Chinese teachers need, according to the Dean I spoke to in China February 2019 (see footnote 1, p. 48), reinforced and continuing training in order to replace traditional teacher-centered patterns of teaching, and learn how to play the role of teacher in a student-centered class. As social learning theory suggests, culture as a cognitional factor also affects environmental factors. Although the advantages of student-centered classes and out-put based learning is now gradually being tired out by some individual teachers in China, and educational reforms have taken place, many features of old teacher-centered teaching seems to dominate compulsory classes for international exchange students.

Current program management policies in Chinese higher education are still expecting and encouraging their professors to ensure control in all aspects of their teaching. The Dean I spoke to said that in some programs, although no national guidelines exist, there would still

be a clear mandate from the local university administration, specifying which parts of the textbook had to be finished before the exchange program ends. Such local regulations are mandatory even if the international students are not to pass an exam. Finishing the textbook on time or not, can according to the Dean, be included in the formal performance appraisal of university teachers. It is easy to see that in such working environment, it is hard for teachers to shift towards student-centered teaching. Because the traditional teacher-centered method requires teachers taking complete control over the class and the course content, the German exchange students struggled being assigned a rather passive role as listener and recipient.

4.1.2 Time and class size management

In Qin's survey on general international students, 68 percent was satisfied with the curriculum management aspects of their program. Eighteen percent thought the program too strict and stressful, 14 percent said it was too relaxing and slack (Qin, 2017, p. 30). This data suggest that curriculum management associated struggles are not an issue for mainstream international students in China. Qin chose therefore not to explore different aspects of curriculum management any further. However, the survey in this current study explores German exchange students perceptions of struggle concerning the management of class hours (number of hours in class per day), class time (class starting/finishing time in a typical day) and class size (number of students in class).

Class Hours

As already mentioned, currently there is no unified guiding policies for international students exchange programs in China, so universities manage their programs locally. Students in different programs may therefore experience completely different types of curriculum management. For this reason, I firstly asked the respondents to describe the situation they had encountered, before asking to what degree they were satisfied. Concerning the number of class hour per day, the data showed that 93 percent was satisfied. Nearly two-third attended class 4-6 hours per day and one-third 2-4 hours per day. Both groups were equally satisfied. These findings suggest that German exchange students have little struggle with the number of hours of class per day.

The data also suggested that the situation is not so simple in the two other aspects, namely starting and finishing time of classes more generally and class size. The overall

satisfaction ratio of the beginning and finishing time of classes is high, with 66 percent being satisfied, only slightly lower than the 68 percent in Qin's (2017, p. 30) study. However, it is hard to verify if German students' struggle on class time is more or less compared to the composite international student group studied by Qin.

Class Time

Among the 34 percent of students in my survey who were not satisfied with the class time, 33 percent struggled with classes starting early. Less than 1 percent reported that the finishing time of the last class in a typical day was a problem. The starting time of the earliest class noted in the survey was 8 a.m. (59 percent), followed by 28 percent typically starting class at 9 a.m., and 13 percent normally starting at 10 a.m. For those who stared at 8 a.m. almost 55 percent reported struggling, compared to less than 5 percent of those typically starting at 9 a.m. All students starting class at 10 a.m. was satisfied. There is a clear correlation between starting hour and students expressing satisfaction. Compared to Asian international students German exchange students, in Nina's opinion, felt that Asian students seemed all right with starting class at 8 a.m. The other interviewees shared similar viewpoints. According to the interviewees, it is common for German primary and secondary schools to start courses at 8 a.m., though usually university courses do not tend to start so early. Therefore, it seems like it should not bother them too much to start early. Through the interviews, it appeared that the most direct reason for struggling starting at 8 a.m. was due to the traffic situation, and not the early start in itself.

German exchange students, as all other international students in China tend to live in international students' accommodation provided by the receiving university. These apartments are usually located quite a distance from campus, which require students taking a bus or other means of public transport. Only high quality universities able to provide international exchange programs, and they are almost exclusively located in the larger densely populated cities. As Joyce sees it, buying a bike or a car for only staying a few months in China, is not really an option. It is predictable that when courses start at 8 a.m., the bus ride takes longer as it hits the morning rush. As for the buses during rush hours, all four interviewees expressed that they were impressively crowded and quite an awful experience. Joyce said that she preferred to leave the student accommodation at 6:30 a.m. when class started at 8 a.m., because at that early hour buses only took 20 minutes to campus. This she did for one reason only, to avoid delays and struggles during rush hour.

Leaving aside the rush hour issue, Mengna provided a somewhat surprising cognitive angle that to some extent might explain the reason why German students expressed dissatisfaction starting class at 8 a.m. As a German Chinese, she holds the view that Chinese people strongly believe that morning time is the best and the most value time for studying. Her parents conveyed such a belief to her when she grew up. The German culture is, in her view, different it his respect. She predicted that in Asian countries with similar cultural background with China, people might also hold such a belief. Therefore, starting at 8 a.m., and having to negotiate rush hour to do so, is probably not such a struggle for Asian international students compared to the German exchange students.

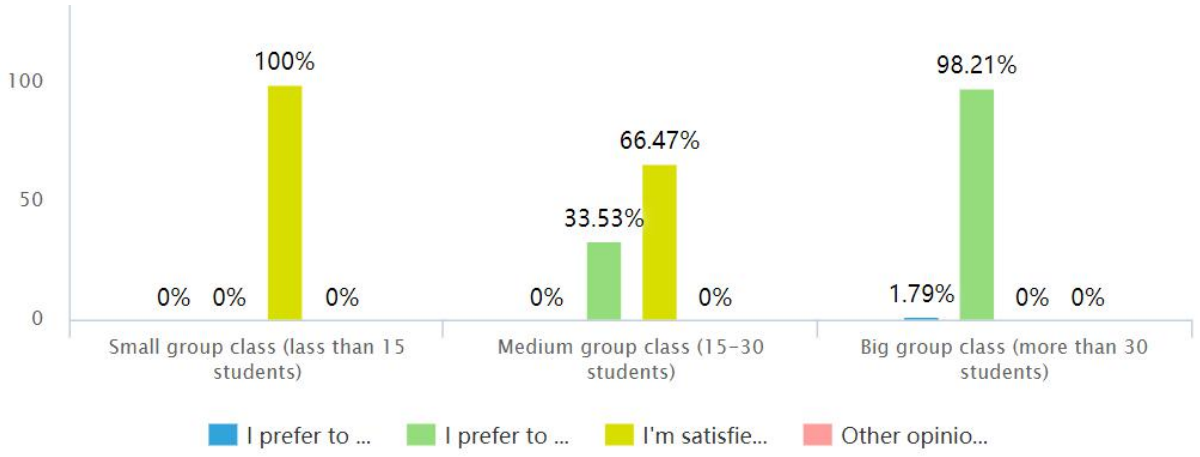
Class Size

Now turning to the struggles associated with class size, the situation being quite similar to class time as there is a big variation amongst German exchange students experiencing different situations. According to the survey result, just over 74 percent of the German exchange students had medium group class with 15-30 persons, and 24 percent attending big classes with more than 30 students. Only slightly more than 1 percent had experienced classes with less than 15 students. German exchange students experience with different class size and their satisfaction ratio are shown in Table 2 and Chart 2 below.

Table 2: class size German exchange students experienced and their attitude toward it (n=229)

X\Y	I prefer to have bigger class size.	I prefer to have smaller class size.	I'm satisfied with the class size I had in China.	Other opinion.
Small group class (lass than 15 students)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	3(100%)	0(0.00%)
Medium group class (15-30 students)	0(0.00%)	57(33.53%)	113(66.47%)	0(0.00%)
Big group class (more than 30 students)	1(1.79%)	55(98.21%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)

Chart 2: class size German exchange students experienced and their attitude toward it



The findings show that the bigger the class size, the lower is the students' satisfaction, and the smaller the class is, the higher is their satisfaction. The satisfaction of having big classes with more than 30 students declined to 0. According to the survey data, one quarter of the sample reported having experienced classes with 30 or more students, and all of those reported struggling.

Compared with the 68 percent who were satisfied with curriculum management as reported by Qin (2017, p. 30), the German exchange students reported almost 51 percent overall satisfaction. One of most direct reasons German students prefer smaller class size, according to the interviewees, is that the normal class size in German schools is around 20 students per class. Joyce explained that big classes with hundred plus students also exists in German universities, but they are relatively rare, and usually provided by distinguished professors, and hardly ever are regular courses for undergraduate students this big. Mengna said that Chinese students was accustomed to big class sizes. She had spent one year in Chinese primary school, as her parents would like her to cultivate more of an Chinese identity.

According to what she experienced, it is quiet common for a primary class to have 30-40 students, and famous schools can even have over 60 students in each class. As Nina said, smaller class size can make it more convenient to have activities and communications, both between student and teacher and among students. Mengna also said she thought that the program managers in Chinese universities might not even realize that a class of 30 is experienced as too big for some international students, especially for German exchange students who are not accustomed to such big classes.

Students who are used to a learning environment based on output, pay attention to interpersonal communication. In contrast, people who are used to learning culture based on input, consider the process of learning as the transport of knowledge. The latter usually do not pay attention to the size of the class, because teachers are seen as capable of transferring knowledge to a big number of students. Bigger class sizes can even be understood as making the process of knowledge transfer more efficient. This explains why it is common to see big group classes in China compared to what is the norm in Germany.

As explained in Chapter 2, one of the most significant cultural differences between Europe and Asia is the conflict between individualism and collectivism. While European countries including Germany show a clear individualistic tendency (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), Asian countries tend to be orientated towards collectivism (Rao, 2015). Joyce says that in her view, the German exchange student thinks that in a small group, the teacher is able to pay more attention to each student and take care of them specifically according to their individual needs, and that they are also given more chances to express their opinions. In Joyce's opinion, giving equal chances for everyone to express their individual needs and fulfilling them is a big advantage for learning. Students affected by collectivist cognition tend to consider individuals as a small part of the community, and individually expressed needs should not be paid too much attention.

Mengna also mentioned that many of her Asian classmates even said that they preferred attending big classes because then teachers usually focus on giving the lecture without asking many questions or paying attention to any one student. Asian students, she contended, say they feel nervous and embarrassed when the teacher pay them individual attention. Reflecting on the cross-cultural adaption theory, with struggles mainly coming from cultural differences, Mengna supported the theoretical idea that struggles mainly seem to emerge due to differences between cultures dominated by individualism on the one hand, and

collectivism or the other. As she saw it, the reason why Asian students tend to feel safer in bigger classes and do not like to express their individual views, it is because they would like to ensure that everyone in the community share recourses equally. The Asian international students tend, in her view, to feel guilty if they, as an individual get more attention and benefit than the group.

The cognition that is somewhat hidden to a member of the Asian community, is that they do not think highly of individual demands and attitudes. This might be one explanation as to why Asian students have a higher acceptation level of big classes than German exchange students being used to be "seen" individually and being used to expressing individual points of view.

Another way that collectivism and individualism thinking affect students' opinion of class size is that Asian students usually do not like the idea of being questioned in class by the teacher. They get stressful when being asked to express their own opinions, while western students do not struggle with this issue (Lei, 2018, p. 9-10). In a collectivist culture, people usually care a lot about how others in the community sees them, so that while expressing personal opinions, they feel responsible to give an opinion or answer which is "correct", even though many questions do not have a standard answer at all, and it makes expressing opinions stressful (Lei, 2018, p. 9-10). Just like what Mengna mentioned, one reason why her Asian classmates prefer bigger classes is that in big group classes teacher usually do not ask much questions.

In a big class, even though teachers may ask questions, the possibility of being picked as the person to answer is still lower than in small group, and one can assume that this set up makes Asian students feel relaxed. However, for German exchange students who have individualistic thinking, being able to express their own opinion is usually considered as a good thing and smaller class size can provide them with more chances to learn.

According to the Dean I spoke to in February 2019 whilst in China, there is also a practical reason why Chinese universities usually do not provide smaller classes. This is directly linked to the limited teacher recourse available, as currently in China, the number of high quality teachers who are specifically trained to teach international students, is very limited. Most universities do not have enough teachers to cover all subjects and all students if the class size is smaller. A medium sized class with 15-30 students is generally seen as

acceptable among mainstream international students in China, according to the Dean. This is probably why it remains the dominant class size, and even if they wanted to, most universities will not be in a position to provide smaller classes.

4.2 Everyday Life Struggles

Everyday life is another important dimension of exchange life and can even be considered as the most important dimension because it includes the most basic living requirements and a good daily life situation forms the foundation of having good study life and social life. However, everyday life dimension is also extremely broad as it involves almost every aspects in life. As for this study, German exchange students' struggles on student housing management, shopping for food and daily necessities in/nearby the university or housing place and using daily life services are presented and compare with struggles of mainstream Asian students.

4.2.1 Student accommodation rules

Renting a student accommodation provided by the university is the most common choice for German exchange students who know little about China. According to the survey 225 out of 229 reported living in student halls provided by the university. Only four of the students had rented accommodation other than what the university provided. The reason was that they wanted to live with their partner, rather than because the location of the student accommodation or the rental cost. Chinese universities do not provide rooms for couples.

Even though living in student accommodation is by far the most common choice, while teaching language courses for international students before doing this research, I have observed a situation where international western students seem to be less satisfied with the student housing than students from other regions. This may have to do with the rules operating in student accommodation. Findings from the survey confirmed this.

Overall 82 percent of the international students in Qin's study were satisfied with the set of rules regulating student accommodation, with a set of rules that students found convenient and human (Qin, 2017, p. 14). In my survey only just under 2 percent were completely satisfied with the housing rules, while nearly 52 percent though the rules were a bit strict, but acceptable. Slightly more than 46 percent though the rules extremely strict and

violating their personal freedom. Qin did not explore if there were any regional difference in the attitude toward student accommodation rules across China. However, regional difference is possible considering that western students, including European, North American and Oceania, only occupied slightly less than 18 percent of the total.

According to the Dean I spoke to, those who designed the student exchange programs actually realized that the housing rules for domestic students might be too strict for international students in addition to living space being crowded with 4-6 domestic students sharing one bedroom. This is why most universities providing programs for international students have set up separate student accommodation for foreigners. In this way, the Dean said, the university could provide single or double bedrooms, including a separate set of house rules.

Findings from the survey confirms the Dean's description of the student accommodation rules and regulations. I found that only 23 percent of the German exchange students lived in the same building as domestic students, while the other 77 percent lived in separate buildings designated for international students only. In the survey, I asked: *"Does the Chinese university ask you to follow these rules below?"*(# 3-5). As many as 99 percent said they obeyed the rule "No pets". Nearly 97 percent said they did tell the caretaker if being away overnight and 87 percent also reported obeying the rule "no opposite-gender visitors allowed". Half said they used no high power electrical household items, whilst only one quarter said they observed the rule of limited access during nighttime. The rule "stop using electric/hot water/internet" is relatively rare to see in international student accommodation. The international student accommodation rules, which are much less strict than the rules for domestic students, were still perceived as too strict for nearly half of the German exchange students in my sample.

According to the interviewees, rules, such as no pets allowed in student housing, also applies in German student housing. Other rules, such as limited access during nighttime and rules regulating the times allowed using electrical appliances such as hair dryers, electric kettles and even hot water were not to be found in Germany. Such rules were seen as weird, and made the German exchange students feel annoyed and somewhat bothered. Joyce said that in Germany the central issue was that you should never bother others. When you are not disturbing others, you have the freedom to do anything you want - facing the consequences and behave like an adult. In China, on the other hand, the housing rules takes on the role as an

invisible mum, in Joyce's words, someone who want to control where you go and what you do at any time. From Joyce's perspective and supported by similar opinions from other interviewees, university students are adults, and adults they ought to be granted freedom accordingly. Those who make bad choice just have to face the consequence themselves, but their freedom to do such a choice should not be violated.

It is easy to see that these thoughts fit the features of individualistic thinking - considering each person an individual and every individual as responsible for their own (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In the case of living in China, those responsible for setting the rules and regulation are Chinese acting out from a collectivist cultural base. In China, students are commonly considered as one collective community whose rights should be protected, with community members having the duty to donate part of individual freedom to achieve better community benefits (Rao, 2015).

As a native Chinese speaker, interviewee Mengna said she was able to discuss and argue about these housing rules with the Program Manager, when being in China as an exchange student. The vast majority of international students would not have been able to that because of their limited language skills. Mengna recounting her discussion with the Program Manager why such housing rules were set also confirms the conflict between two value systems: collectivism in China and individualism in Germany. According to Mengna, the Program Manager had told her that rules such as limited access during nighttime and no opposite-gender visitors allowed were aimed at ensuring the security of all the students living in the building. Forbidding going in and out during the night without having an urgent reason was a security measure reducing the risk of criminals entering. Forbidding opposite-gender visitors, students will face less risk of being raped or facing sexual harassment. The Program Manager, as Mengna understood it, also confirmed that adults should have freedom of going out at night or bringing opposite-gender visitors. He also pointed out to Mengna, that granting more freedom to the individual student would mean a potential higher risk for all students living in student accommodation - everyone should sacrifice something for a safer student village.

Mengna said she shared the Program Managers thoughts and value system, as they were generally accepted and confirmed by the Chinese society. Society see students as one community, and not in terms of individuals. The university, in turn, also see their students as a whole community. Mengna provided the following example: If a female students brings a guy

she does not know into her student accommodation in Germany, and the guy raped her, people will think that this is an act of violence, and that the girl was careless to bring a stranger to her place. In China, people will think that this university is failing the job of protecting the security of its students and students lacked education in self-protection. In other words, the individualistic way of thinking considers individuals as individuals, whilst the collectivist way of thinking considers individuals as a representative of the whole student community. For this reason, when bad thing happens to any member of the community, this harms the reputation of the whole of that community.

As Asian countries share a similar value system based on collectivism (Rao, 2015), it is predictable that Asian international students have less cognitional conflicts with the housing rules than German exchange students do. Nina mentioned that she heard many Asian classmates sometimes saying that they find it a bit troublesome to have to obey such rules. However, in general said that they seem to enjoy it, because these well-rounded and reliable rules make them feel safe and relaxed while staying in student accommodation. Nina added that she felt annoyed and that she simply cannot understand their feelings at all. Different value systems explain why German exchange students struggle with understanding the security issues and different notions of freedom underpinning the strict student accommodation rules.

However, the different value systems do not explain the rule that high power household applications are not allowed. This rule is perceived as troublesome for students, but forbidding their use does not provide any benefits to the overall community. None of the four interviewees understood why such rules commonly exist as part of student accommodation regulations, and they were not able to come up with any possible explanation. The Dean I spoke to pointed to government funding of higher education, as the main reason for such rules. She explained that the universities receive only a very limited amount of basic funding to cover student accommodation, including electricity, water and internet. In 2018 the amount per student was equivalent to 1300 NOK per year, an amount which has not been increased in many years, despite such services getting more expensive year by year. Due to lack of sufficient funding the universities also lack the means to upgrade the facilities. The electric system can be old, and therefore represent a security issue – it might crush if too many high power household applications are used at the same time.

These are the main reasons why universities have to keep their expenses on electricity and water under control, and strict rules on the consumption of electricity and water apply. The rule should in principle only concern domestic students, as there is no policy forbidding universities to ask for full funding to cover the housing expenses for international students. Whilst some regulation makers realized this, others did not, making those rules apply for international student accommodation also. The Dean also thought it unfair to have the same strict rules for international students as for domestic students, because the former pay a higher rent. The fact that not all universities have such rules explains why a higher percentage of the German exchange students in my survey struggled with rules regulating access, and not so much with rules regulating the use of electrical applications and the consumption of hot water.

The vast majority of international students was satisfied with student accommodation, confirmed by Qin (2017, p. 14). As the Dean pointed out, students from Asian and African developing countries currently dominate the international student community in China. In general, these students are more familiar with having to limit their consumption of electricity and water, so the strict rules may not be perceived as a struggle for them. The overall satisfaction concerning international student accommodation has, as the Dean sees it, to do with the Asian and African students understanding and agreeing with the rules on access and the need to trade individual freedom for increased security in the student hall. Asian culture show a tendency of having higher acceptation of power distance, and as the Dean has experienced, Asian students tend not to doubt or argue whether a regulation made by authorities is reasonable or not. They usually just obey the regulation and change themselves to fit and get used to the situation.

4.2.2 Getting foods and daily necessities

According to both Qin's survey and my survey, the struggle on getting proper food and daily necessities is not a serious struggle. 81 percent of German exchange student reported having no trouble buying food they wanted, compared to the 97 percent being able to buy all kinds of daily necessities conveniently (Qin, 2017, p. 15). Only 19 percent of the German exchange student faced difficulties finding food they searched for, compared to under 17 percent of the international students in Qin's study (2017, p. 15).

As Qin pointed out that a big part of international students who struggled the most were students from Muslim countries, who needed Halal foods due to religious reason (2017,

p. 22). The main reason why the German exchange students struggled getting food was not religious requirements, but getting milk products such as butter, cheeses and sour cream. Although none of my four interviewees said they had faced such struggles while answering the survey, Mengna, who were familiar both with German and Chinese eating habits, pointed out that the struggle may have to do with differences in diet culture in the two countries.

The German diet, as is the European diet in general, tend to get protein mainly from milk and milk products while Chinese diet culture get protein mainly from soya beans. That is why there are many kinds of products made by soya beans. The German exchange students may not even know these products. Milk products, so familiar to a German, are still rare to see in China. Because the number of European students in China is still limited, it is reasonable that the food stores situated near the international student villages will not take the risk of stocking milk products.

Different online shopping habits, identified by the interviewees, was another reason why the German exchange students struggled to get hold of milk products. Joyce explained that although online shopping had developed for many years already, Germans usually only used online shopping to buy what is hard to get in a local store. The delivery fee is high and for people who are not living in a big city, the delivery period can be very long, or alternatively you have to pick up the package yourself. For this reason, most German mostly do shopping online when the unit price is relatively high. For those reasons, they will not think about buying milk products online - the unit prices is low and on top of that, the milk products may go off. In China, the situation is completely different. China has a large population and the express delivery industry is large. The delivery fee can be cheap, if not free, and the delivery time short, 3-5 days regardless of where you live. For people living in cities, delivery time can be less than 2 days. For this reason, Chinese people buy almost everything online, including vegetables, fruit, fresh meat and fish.

Chinese students who cannot find a certain type of food in a local store, the first idea will be to search for an online store. When I asked the interviewees why do you not buy milk products online in the interviews, all of them, including Mengna, said they never even thought about this as a possibility. Differences in online shopping habits in Germany and China affects people’s cognition, resulting in German exchange students struggling when food shopping.

4.2.3 Using daily life services

International students experience with the use of daily life services such as bank service, laundries and services provided by cell phone stores were not explored in Qin's work. According to the result I got, there is no significant struggles in this area for the German exchange students. Nearly 100 percent expressed that they can find any services they need in China and that they feel satisfied with the services provided. Only one out of the 229 respondents in my survey brought up first line medical service in China, commenting on the inconvenience because the patient is not assigned a personal doctor.

Comparing with the very high satisfied ratio concerning daily life services, struggling with the language barrier while using them, is slightly more significant, but still not a big issue. About 21 percent of the exchange students did not meet any difficulties communicating with the staff of daily services providers. The majority of them (67 percent) expressed that although finding it difficult communicating in Chinese, it was still possible for them to communicate successfully by using English or body language. Only 12 percent of them reported having met serious struggles, and had to ask for help from native Chinese speakers. The struggle caused by language barrier while using daily life services was much less significant than I imaged in advance. Because the Chinese language skill of exchange students is limited and the population of skilled English speakers in mainland China is quiet small, with English being an unofficial and minority language in most of Asian countries including China (Crystal, 2003), I did not predict that using English in addition could be so useful to exchange students.

The education level of Chinese people show a significant urban-rural difference and people mastering English is highly concentrates in cities (Zhou & Chen, 2018). Chinese universities qualified to offer international exchange programs are also usually located in cities. Competition in the market may also make the service providers hire staff who can speak some English in stores located near to the universities and international student accommodation. In sum, German exchange students living in international university accommodation are likely meet service providers who speak some English.

4.3 Social Life Struggles

Social gathering with domestic students is a useful way for German exchange students to improve their oral Chinese language skills, and an efficient way to get to know and experience Chinese daily life and culture. Socializing and communicating with Chinese students forms an important part of the period abroad for international exchange students.

Most international students in China are motivated and willing to communicate with local Chinese students (Qin, 2017, p. 17-18). This is especially true for international students from Asian and Western countries, while international students from African and Middle East countries tend to feel discriminated by Chinese students. The latter group is therefore show a relatively lower motivated level to communicate with the domestic students (Qin, 2017, p. 32). While knowing that German exchange students as a part of western students who show high willing level on social with local students as mainstream Asian students do, I will compare and analysis their different struggles while social with local students in China in the part below.

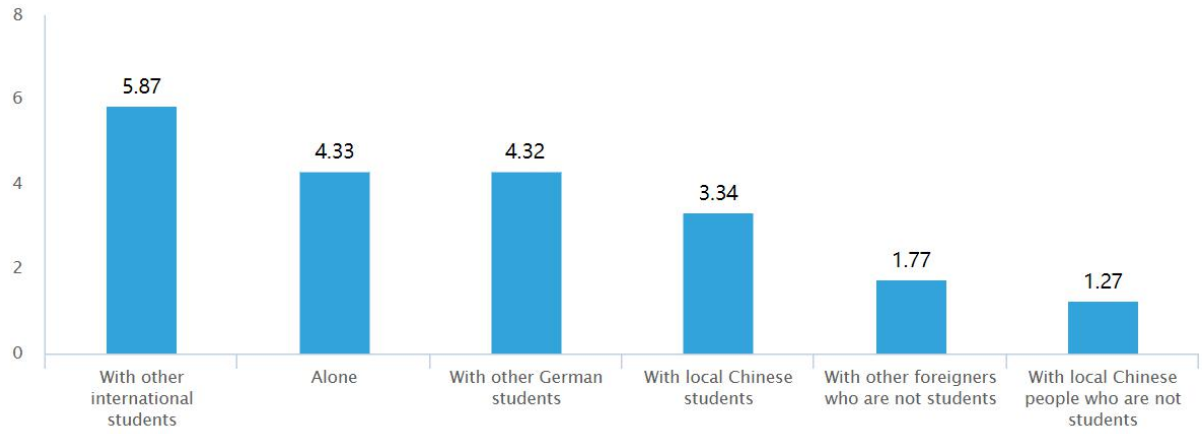
4.3.1 Socializing patterns

As Qin pointed out, although most of international students in China are interested in communicating with local Chinese students and showed a high motivation level, the actual social situation is still not optimistic (Qin, 2017). Through his interviews, he founded out that except the necessary communications in academic activities, international students tend to social much more together with other international students from the same original country than with local students, and the frequency of them to social with local students is limited (Qin, 2017).

Socializing with Whom?

The result of my survey showed a similar situation among German students. Asking "*Whom do you usually social with during free time*" (#4-1), the following six categories were offered: "*Other German students*", "*Other international students*", "*Local Chinese students*", "*Stay alone*", "*Other foreigners who are not students*" and "*Local Chinese people who are not students*" . The respondents were asked to range every one of these six from high frequency to low frequency on a scale from 6-1, six being the highest frequency and 1 the lowest. The average score calculated out by integrating all respondents' answers are shown in Chart 3 below:

Chart 3: Whom do German exchange students usually social with during free time



The Bar Chart above clearly shows that the German exchange students prioritize socializing with other students (the first four bars) rather than people who are not students (the last two bars). Within the overall group of students, socializing with local students show significant less frequency than socializing with other international students, including the Germans.

Qin's findings differ from mine in that they found that international students tended to socialize mostly with students from their home country (Qin, 2017, p. 32), whilst German students seem to socialize less with other Germans than with international students overall. This, as my interviewees said, was mainly because the number of German student in any given exchange program is usually very limited, and therefore not easy to find fellow German students to social with.

In the survey, the German exchange students were asked if they felt they were given enough chances and possibilities to socialize with domestic students. To map for what reasons, the survey presented multiple choices including: "*We are not mixed with local student and can seldom meet them. (having different classes, living in different places, study in different campus etc.)*" (# 4-2-A), "*I try to social with Chinese people but feel like they don't want to social with me somehow*" (# 4-2-B), "*I am not confident on my Chinese language skill, so I am not able to seek for chances of social with Chinese people"* (#4-2-C) and *"Others"* (# 4-2-D) as a self-fill-in option. The result showed that they had significant struggle, as only 17 percent felt they could. The other 83 percent answered that they did not have enough chances socializing with domestic students. More than 71 percent of those, said that sometimes Chinese students seemed not willing to social with them, while only less than 3 percent of the

83 percent, identified language barrier as a serious obstruction getting chances to social with local students.

From the survey data, it seems clear that exchange programs involving German students do not mix international students with domestic students. This fits with the overall picture, according to the Dean whom I spoke to. As mentioned before, only 24 percent of the survey respondents had courses together with local students and only 23 percent lived in the same student hall as the domestic students. Interviewee Nina and Josch explained that in their exchange program, international students were located in a separate campus located quite far away from the university main campus. The reasons why some universities locate international students in separate campuses rather than mixing them with the local students, have been discussed earlier in this chapter, i.e. language barriers and student accommodation management. Given these issues it might seem reasonable for universities to locate international exchange students separately from local students, however, it most surely impede international students getting enough change to get in touch and socialize across culturally established boundaries.

The survey findings suggests that the Chinese students may not be that willing to social with German exchange students. Being asked about their opinion as to what the reason for Chinese students not wanting to socialize might have been, nearly 43 percent ticketed "*Chinese students are too busy*" (#4-3-B). Almost 62 percent ticketed "*We can hardly break the ice and start social*" (# 4-3-C). None of them ticketed "*Chinese students are indifferent/unfriendly*"(#4-3-A). There were 5 responds chose "*Other reasons*" and wrote opinions such as "Chinese student usually play with friends they already knew and don't want to involve strangers" and "they are too restrained while talking with newly meet people". Data from my survey supports Qin's findings with reference to European, Western and Asian students, in that Chinese students are friendly, but find it hard to start socializing. He also noted that socializing across cultural boundaries usually were limited to the exchange and simple greeting and superficial talk (Qin, 2017, p. 32).

Domestic students in any country and cultural context might be assumed to be busier than the international exchange students. The Chinese domestic students are probably not an exception, facing social demands from family and friends. When they are free and show up in social places such as cafes and pubs, German students still struggle socializing with them. As

the interviewees suggested, the reason might be that local students usually interact with friends, therefore showing little interest actively inviting strangers into their group.

As Nina had experienced it, Chinese students usually go to cafes and pubs to have fun with their friend and talk amongst themselves, rather than going out to meet new people. She felt it was quiet hard to join in, even though sometimes she had managed to do so. In her view, Chinese students usually do not directly refuse others to join their group, although the conversation very often stopped at exchanging greetings and questions such as "Where are you from?" and "Why did you come to China?". Nina said it was obvious that the Chinese restrained themselves, not speaking and laughing that much as they were before she joined them. Joyce also pointed out that Chinese students, especially female students, were regulated by commonly held attitudes such as: "Pubs and night clubs are not places for good students!" Comparing with students in Europe, relatively fewer Chinese students socialized in pubs and bars. Joyce found that chatting and having fun with friends in cafes and restaurants was more appropriate. She found it more difficult to start talking with strangers in these places than in pubs and bars, as the environment in cafes and restaurants is more silent and private. It might be seen as quite wired to go to others' table and start talking, Joyce said.

Different interpersonal communicating patterns rooted in collectivism and individualism, can explain this type of cross-cultural struggle to adapt. As Chinese people are affected by collectivism, they tend to keep long-term and in-deep interpersonal relationships, but are cautious to initiate and form new relationships. They show a completely different attitude when socializing with people belonging to the same community compared to people not belonging to that community. Within a collectivist culture people usually keep very close and stable relationship among community members, making it hard for new members to join in (Davis, 2001). For the same reasons, the group of friends can also be seen as a psychological community. Belonging to friend community explains, at least partially, why Chinese students prefer to meet up with and have fun with old friends. For strangers, who are not members of the "friend community", it is hard to join in and establish a relationship.

Due to the high-context culture in China, Chinese people tend not to express their opinions directly, especially not critical ones, this in order to avoid conflicts (Hall, 1976). Therefore, when strangers enter a "friend community", Chinese will usually not refuse in any direct manner, but this does not mean that strangers can get into the community easily. As a typical feature of collectivist style interpersonal relationship, Chinese people usually only

have hearty talk with people confirmed as friends/community members. There is even a proverb in Chinese language saying that it is dangerous to have a hearty talk with a peripheral acquaintance. For this reason, when strangers try to enter into the ongoing chat, the Chinese will normally just stop talking personally, turning to general topics that are seen all right to talk about with non-community members. This explains why Nina and many of the survey respondents struggled fitting in and breaking the ice.

Mengna expanded on this struggle, being brought up with individualism underpinning the German culture and the collectivism from her Chinese parents. For German exchange students, with no experience of collectivism, it is normal and acceptable to start and have a short-term interpersonal relationship just for fun. Chatting for hours with strangers in bars may be normal for most German students. Whether or not this result in a long-term friendship depends on the quality of the communication. For a typical Chinese, being familiar with each other is the basic condition of starting real communication.

The cultural features mentioned explain why Asian and Western students share similar struggles socializing with Chinese students. Asian students do also draw on collectivism when establishing interpersonal relationships, much like the Chinese students do. This is why they understand better how Chinese students socialize compared to Western students. Nevertheless, that knowledge will not help them to break into Chinese students' "friend community" more easily than Western students. In other words, the struggle seem to be similar for German exchange students as for Asian.

For this reason, to start socializing with Chinese students, it is essential to get to know them as a member of a "classmate community" or a "roommate community". However, as demonstrated above, there exist some practical problems mainly due to how the individual university is managed. It is worth noticing that the university is autonomous in the sense that it could set up mixed classes and accommodation. However, there seems to be some financial structures slowing this down. In sum, physical separation means that the German exchange students have in fact only limited chances to enter into a friend community with Chinese students.

Effects of social-promoting events

For the reasons explained above, considering Chinese students' collectivist tendency, it might be vise to provide exchange students more opportunities not only to be part of culturally mixed learning and housing communities, but also have access to arenas to socialize. Many universities seems to be aware of the struggle and do provide social events to aid and promote cross-cultural socialization. The quality and effect of these social promoting activities tend to limited, according to findings in this current study.

As the survey result showed, 53 percent of the German exchange students had access to cross-cultural events set up particularly for them to meet up and socialize with Chinese students and other international students. Nearly 38 percent said they did not hear about any such event, which could have to do with advertising of socializing events being limited. Just under 9 percent in my survey, said that they knew for sure that no such events had been organized by their exchange university.

German exchange students, who said there had been such events, were asked the following question: "*Do those events work well on helping international students social with local students?*" (# 4-5). Only 4 out of 122 (3.28%) of students said they had no idea, because they had not participated. Compared to Qin's findings, showing that 35 percent of the overall international students community never participated in such events (Qin, 2017, p. 18), German exchange students appeared as more interested in participating. However, although most of them participated, their feedback was not that positive. Only 23 percent experienced such events as useful for getting to know Chinese students. As many as 74 percent said participating had been somewhat useful, but not as much as expected.

Due to lack of reliable relevant data, I have not been able to compare German exchange students with mainstream Asian international students. Drawing on findings from the survey and the interview data of this study, the following section presents my analysis of how and why these social promoting events did not work as intended by the university, and as the German exchange students expected.

Three out of the four interviewees had personally experienced one or more social promoting events. Independently of each other, they described the events in terms of promoting language exchange activities. Students were able to sit down together and have a free cup of tea talking. None of them experienced or had heard of any international students experiencing any other social promoting events other than the one described above.

Firstly, what made these activities less helpful was that the main aim for international students to participate was to socialize with local students, but very few Chinese students participated. Joyce participated four times in events called "Tea party together with local students." She estimated that the international students made up around 80 percent, while only a few local students joined in.

According to the Chinese students who were talking with Joyce at the tea party, it had only been advertised to the local students in the form of a poster in the hallway of the main campus where they had their classes. Josch mentioned a similar situation. He also mentioned that Chinese students usually looked very busy. Because international student accommodation and teaching building were in different locations from the Chines students', these social events usually took place near to the international students, and therefore probably a bit out of the way for local students.

Reflecting on this issue from a management perspective, the Dean whom I spoke to, said that currently in Chinese universities, the management of international students is separate from management of local students. The management of local students is divided into different departments, so to hold such events for both international and local students, international students management office must actively seek cooperation from various other offices. There is a high risk that the cooperation may not be successful, due to factors such as the time and place of the event. Such practical issues as time and place are not easily resolved, without a closer cooperating relationship among different departments in the university.

Some social events simply locate international and local students together, without a specific program. These types of events are, according to the interviewees actually not so different from meeting in a cafe or a pub. The only noticeable difference is that the local students who participate at such events are willing and prepared to social with international students. The problem remains that Chinese students, for the cultural reasons discussed above, hardly are capable starting or entering a meaningful communication with strangers. To break the ice remains a key issue. Mengna said that in tea parties, after introducing oneself, the topic tended to be those general and boring ones, such as how is your hometown in Germany and how do you feel about China. In her experience, it was hard to find out anything about each other's personality. In the language exchange events, it turned out to be even harder to start a real friendship because most of local students participating aimed at practicing languages,

instead of socializing and establish the basis for friendship. Talking in language exchange events always had to be purposeful in a pragmatic way.

Mengna held the opinion that it was simply not enough just putting international and domestic students together physically. She advocated the importance of giving students a chance to know about and understand each other naturally was a key factor getting familiar with each other. She assumed that it would be more helpful if the university held regular musical or sports events, including both international and local students. Getting familiar through such events might facilitate students to start and keep socializing by themselves, rather than just socialize without knowing each other before, as is currently the case for tea party or language exchange events.

Music and sports for exchange students seems to be very rare in current exchange programs, this according to Mengna. She had not come across anyone in her department in her home university who had experienced such events while being on exchange. When she was on exchange in China, she had tried to contact the university orchestra to ask if exchange students could join in, but the suggesting was refused. The clubs for local students such as orchestra and sports teams do not advertise themselves for attracting new members among exchange students, because they want students who commit for a longer period. They also, according to Mengna, prefer new members who can communicate without having to negotiate language barriers. Although Chinese is her mother tongue, as an exchange student staying one year only due to the length of her exchange program, Mengna was not permitted to play in the university orchestra. Despite not being able to play music, she said it was reasonable for the clubs to express such concerns, but she suggested that it might be helpful if Exchange Students Management Office discussed and heard the students' view. It would also be beneficial to all parties if the clubs organized regular events such as concerts and sport events, instead of simply hold tea parties with small talk. Other interviewees expressed similar opinions. Organized events with a given topic may help international students familiarize with local students more effectively.

4.3.2 Struggles while social with Chinese Students

In addition to the struggles getting the chance to start true communication with local students, the survey identified struggles appearing after starting socializing. The struggles international students met while socializing with local Chinese students were sorted into the

following four categories by Qin (2017, p. 17-18): Firstly, confusing real opinions and euphemistic expressions (59.21%). Secondly, difficulties understanding humor (55.23%). Thirdly, difficulties understanding behavior due to value system differences (37.18%), and finally, difficulties caused by language barriers (47.29%). In addition was the difficulty finding interesting topics to talk about (Qin, 2017, p. 32). In order to be able to compare the German exchange students with the international students all five areas of struggle identified by Qin were covered in my survey. The result is presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3： Struggles German exchange students faced while socializing with Chinese students (n=229)

	Yes, a lot	A bit, but alright	Not at all
Can hardly find an interesting topic for both	87(37.99%)	135(58.95%)	7(3.06%)
Can hardly understand Chinese people's humors	74(32.31%)	138(60.26%)	17(7.42%)
Can hardly understand Chinese people's thoughts and behavior due to value system difference	1(0.44%)	35(15.28%)	193(84.28)
Language barrier	0(0%)	44(19.21%)	185(80.79%)
Difficulty on differentiate real opinion and euphemistic expression	2(0.87%)	202(88.21%)	25(10.92%)

Compared with the perceived struggle of international students, i.e. Asian international students, German exchange students show significantly less struggle on language barriers (19.21% compared to 47.29% as reported by Qin, 2017, p. 17) and value system difference (15.72% compared to 37.18% as reported by Qin, 2017, p. 18).

The finding showing that German exchange students have significant less struggle with language barriers. This is an expected result, because in contrast to the situation in classes for international students, where teachers and students are only allowed to use Chinese, the German exchange students attend classes were English is used as a supporting language. Compared with international student from Asian countries, McArthur (2003) points out that international students from western countries, especially Northern America, Western and

Northern Europe including Germany, have in general a better command of English. Although there are some specific Asian countries/regions where English is an official language, such as Singapore and Hong Kong, English is an unofficial minority language in most Asian countries today (McArthur, 2003).

Identifying their daily life struggles through my survey, German exchange students expressed that they struggled with language barrier issues. However, they also said it was possible for them to communicate successfully by also using English and body language. Findings from the interviews supported this point, as all interviewees said it had been hard for them to socialize with local Chinese students relying on using Chinese only. Drawing on Chinese and English, with the help from digital dictionaries, they were in fact able to express everything they wanted. Some local students also preferred the international students to use English rather than Chinese, because they wanted to practice their English. This according to the Dean.

The finding that German exchange students struggled less understanding Chinese students' thought and behavior, compared to the international students from Asia, is an unexpected result because the difference in value system between the German and the Chinese students tend to be quite large. A possible reason, as Mengna saw it, is that because German students tend to be affected a lot by individualism, considering every person as unique rather than part of any community. For this reason, people with individual thoughts tend to accept differences among different persons more easily, because people should be unique and have different value system in their cognitive pattern.

Because interpersonal relationships in individualistic cultures are not as close as in collectivist cultures, people with the former cultural background tend to face rather than avoid conflicts (Davis, 2001). They also do not care that much about how others think, respecting their way of thinking when the differences will not do any actual harm. Therefore, German exchange students may feel there is a big cultural difference on value system while socializing with Chinese students, but it does not bother them much. For most of them, it does not take the form of a struggle. For students with collectivism cultural background who would like to avoid conflicts, every difference in the value system may be considered a potential dangerous factor, leading to conflicts when socializing. This may make the Chinese students feeling they have to be more careful and restrained while communicating with international students. People with collectivist features, such as Asian international students, tend to be bothered by

these value differences more easily than German exchange students. Ever though the value differences between Asian and Chinese students is smaller than the values differences between German and Chinese.

Finding Topics

The most significant struggle identified by the survey concerning German exchange students socializing with the Chinese, seems to be finding an interesting topic to talk about. As shown in Table 3 above, only seven (n=229) students did not report this struggle at all. It is hard to say whether it is more or less significant than for the Asian international students, because Qin (2017) did not provide any figures on this finding, which emerged from the interview part of his mixed-method study.

For this reason, I asked the interviewees to share their thoughts on to what degree Asian students may also face this struggle. Nina said it depends, but that she felt like Japanese and Korean students have less struggle, whilst students from southern Asia are facing the same problems as the German exchange students. The reason is that Korea and Japan are very near to China, and Chinese students are usually more familiar with Japanese and Korean culture such as K-pop music and Japanese animation, topics they enjoy discussing. Joyce gave a similar answer, adding that students from USA and UK seems to have less struggle with these types of conversations compared to other Westerners. This, she said, was because the cultural influence of USA is so strong and it is easy for them to find topics from Hollywood movies and NBA. British TV series such as Black Mirror and Sherlock were very famous and popular in China when she was on exchange. Josch also mentioned that students who have been to China several times tend to have less struggle conversing, because they can raise a topic from their former experiences, and they also tend to have less language barriers and are more familiar with Chinese pop culture.

As a native Chinese speaker who knows Chinese culture from the inside, Mengna did not have this struggle finding something to talk about. She pointed out that as a cognitive pattern, a person's interest is formed according to the cultural context and the persons social environment. As she saw it, the difficulty finding an interesting topic for both parties, is because of the cultural strangeness between them. The more familiar people are with each other's culture, the easier it is for them to find good topics when socializing. In the case of Germany and China being so far away from each other both culturally and geographically,

students live in somewhat separate worlds, while neighboring countries, such as Korea and Japan have a natural advantage finding common ground discussing contemporary issues.

The German language is a factor limiting Chinese students' access to contemporary culture through the media industry. It is therefore difficult for Chinese to know about German students' interests, as is the case the other way around. Mengna said that as far as she knew, some Chinese universities had realized this problem, selecting Chinese students studying German language as language partners for the German exchange students. In such case, the communication tended to be a kind of informal study, rather than socializing aiming at building friendship. International students from countries neither geographically close to China nor particularly visible in mainstream Chinese media are most likely facing struggle finding shared interests with the Chinese students.

Understanding humor

The second significant struggle identified by the German exchange students is the different senses of humor. Again, according to Qin 55 percent of the international students struggled (Qin, 2017, p. 17), compared with 93 percent of the German exchange students in my study more or less. These findings supports the argument that the struggle faced by exchange students from Germany is more significant than mainstream international students in China. My interviewees did not have any views on why this was so. They had sometime wondered, they said, why the Chinese students had been laughing out loud, and also wondered why the Chinese sometimes looked puzzled when German students laughed. This finding is actually an expected result because the sense of humor also depends on culture in more or less the same way as do popular youth culture, mentioned above.

Easy jokes, such as ridiculing defects of self or others and practicing mischief on others, appear in almost every culture and therefore being relatively easy to understand across the various cultures. However, these kinds of jokes are usually low-level and impolite, so universities students usually will not make those in a social setting. More suitable jokes which are higher level and suitable to make in a social environment, require relevant cultural knowledge in order to understand. For example, many Chinese students who are learning English usually watch some American talk shows or comedies, such as Friends as a listening practice. A common feeling watching such series is that despite understanding every word, the overall scene is confusing. If you do not know anything about American culture, you will

not understand why "*Charlie's Angels*" refers to a group of girls planning to do naughty things.

Not sharing a sense of humor is, in many cases, caused by cultural strangeness between persons with different cultural background, especially if they have little or no knowledge of the culture of the others. An example focusing on a German/Chinese social context was given by Mengna, illustrating this kind of difficulty very well. After one of the tea party events for local and international students, everyone helped cleaning up the venue. A Chinese person went to the toilet, and coming back, he saw the others cleaning up the room. He then went to the front, putting on a very serious face shouting: "Hello comrades!" Everyone looked surprised, but then another Chinese person answered: "Hello headman!" This was followed by the one in front shouting: "Comrades, you have worked hard!" Almost all the Chinese students then shouted: "Serving the people!" At this point the Chinese, as well as the international students from Russia and those with a Chinese background, started laughing out very loud. Most of the other international students looked completely dazed. This type of shouting out, followed by collective answers, is in fact well known commands used by a chairman/headman reviewing the army and military factories in communist countries in the near past. Russian international students sharing a similar history of having radical communist governments, have similar cognitional pattern to the domestic Chinese students. Even without understanding the commands, those present could still can feel the atmosphere of radical communism in the Chinese students' joke. As a practical joke most of those familiar with Chinese culture found it funny, while international students without such a cognitional pattern, had no idea about what had happened and why people had laughed. For this reason, it is not difficult to understand that Asian international students, especially eastern Asians, tend to have less struggle understanding and sharing the Chinese students' sense of humor.

Another reason why western international students struggle the most understanding Chinese humor is the internet environment in China. It is widely known, that internet is controlled by the Chinese Government, and nearly all mainstream western social media are forbidden in China. People have to use VPN service to change their IP address if they want to use such services. Probably most Chinese people do not do it, because it is quite expensive and troublesome (and illegal). On the other hand, Chinese internet companies create Chinese

versions of social media with similar functions. For examples, Weibo instead of Twitter, QQ Space instead of Facebook and Wechat instead of WhatsApp.

As an important part of popular Chinese culture, the content in social media provide new references for young people's jokes. Because the Chinese have their own version of social media, and the popular references and memes that Chinese youth are using, can be completely different from the ones that are popular amongst international students. Domestic and international students may therefore not get each other's' points at all. All my interviewees mentioned jokes they had heard from Chinese students without getting the point, upon which the Chinese students explained that it was a funny meme popular on Weibo. However, none of the interviewees provided any example, because those jokes were not understandable for them and therefore difficult to remember.

Although differences in the social media environment applies to all international students. Popular jokes created in neighboring Korea and Japan are commonly well known in Chinese, as they are translated and introduced in Chinese through the various legal social media. As a country Germany, whose culture influence is not so strong in China, and with a language barrier, joke references so popular in German social media, are hardly known by the Chinese. This also applies in the opposite direction. This point may also, to some extent explain why German exchange students have more struggle understanding Chinese students' jokes than mainstream international students do.

Differentiating euphemistic expression from real opinion

The last finding concerning struggles concerns the ability to differentiate Chinese people's euphemistic expressions from their real opinions. Euphemistic expressions are commonly used to describe the type of expressions used by a person who is afraid of upsetting or offending someone. In this respect the German exchange students suffered more than did the international students overall when socializing with domestic students. Just over 89 percent of the respondents in my study had more or less struggled with this issue, compared to just under 60 percent of the international students (Qin, 2017, p. 17). Such a big difference in perceived struggle it is an expected result. According to Hall's (1976) theory of high-low context culture, using euphemistic expression is a typical feature of high context cultures. German culture is considered as one of the most typical low context cultures (Hall, 1976). German students have therefore not had the chance to form cognitive patterns of being

euphemistic while communicating in their original cultural environment. In addition, they have not necessarily had the chance to gain experience of differentiate euphemistic expressions from real opinions before they arrive in China. Therefore is not a surprise that they commonly fail to grasp such expressions. The main reason pointed out by interviewees is that German people not usually think about hiding their real opinions while communicating. Thus, it is no surprise that the German exchange students tend to feel confused and struggle, when Chinese students pepper their language with euphemistic expressions, coming across as unclear and as having vague opinions.

Mengna raised the question whether or not respondents who said they had not met struggle on this issue, did not even realized that they had been up against so-called euphemistic expressions. Mengna explained that many times when she had asked: "May I...?" or "Shall we...?", the Chinese had responded with an "alright", although they did not feel like saying "yes", but did not feel strongly against it either. In order not to hurt any ones feeling or coming across as offensive, they said "Alright!" with a disapproval tone and/or a negative facial expression, instead of directly saying: "Alright, but better not!" German exchange students are generally not cognitively familiar with euphemistic expressions, and it is possible for them to miss the fact that they confuse real opinions and euphemistic expressions. Mengna took the view that such situations are quiet common to see in social life. If a Chinese students tells you he knows little about mathematics, and you believed this to be a fact, and you later finds out that he holds a Phd in mathematics, this, it must be realized, is an euphemistic expression for being modest, and not a lie. Mengna also assumed that never realizing that Chinese students use euphemistic expressions in order not to offend or upset anyone, may explain why almost 9 out of 10 German exchange students thought they just struggled just a bit rather than having serious struggles with this issue.

Joyce said that she herself had struggled a bit, but not that much as she had imaged before communicating directly with her language exchange partner. Apparently the Chinese teachers had told the domestic students that western people tended to be very direct while communicating, asking Chinese students to avoid being too euphemistic while talking with international students. Joyce's German teacher had told her and the other exchange students leaving for China that the local students tend to be euphemistic while communicating. To the interviewees local Chinese students tried to be direct while communicating with them, but sometimes they still could not stop using euphemistic expressions. Nina pointed out that the

struggle of Chinese students' euphemistic expression tend to be more of a struggle at beginning of the exchange period. She said Chinese students were hiding their different/negative opinions at the beginning, in order to avoid possible conflicts. As they became more familiar and relaxed, they started sharing their real opinions.

5 Discussion

Through this research, it has been demonstrated that German exchange students face particular struggles studying in China. I have tried but not been able to identify empirical international researches focusing specifically on German exchange students. What I have found is that their struggle more or less differ from the struggles recently mapped by researchers focusing on the general international students group in China (Qin, 2017; Zhao, 2016), which is dominated by Asian international students. The differences in perceived struggles have been sorted and presented through the use of the following three aspects: study life, everyday life and social life.

As mentioned by Williams, "According to Dignes (1983), Adler wrote that the multicultural person is grounded in his or her own cultural reality." (Williams, 2005, p. 359) Applying a cross-cultural adaptation perspective, it is possible to classify international students' struggles are classified into three dimensions: academic adaptation, psychological adaptation and sociocultural adaptation. This research focus on academic and sociocultural adaptation, but not on psychological adaptation. Academic adaptation has been used mapping study life struggles, and sociocultural adaptation exploring both daily life struggles and social life struggles. All these three areas of struggles identified are mainly caused by cultural differences.

Based on finding from this mixed-method research study, I argue that struggles students from a particular country are facing tend to be unique. This argument is supported by findings presented by international researchers, such as Forbush and Foucault-Welles (2016). They researched Chinese students' adaptation being in the US, and their data showed Chinese students have specific struggles adapting to American social network sites. The main reason they found was that almost all of those social networks were in fact blocked in China. Seen from a social learning perspective, it can be argued that students' behavior were affected by particular environmental factor in their home country, thus facing particular struggle studying abroad. Another relevant study on cultural differences between Italian and American pre-school children also drew the conclusion that the behavior of children from each of these two countries shows internal consistency, whilst differences in behavior across the two countries was linked to the impact of differential socialization (Cozzi et al., 2013, p. 482). I have

searched the international literature but not been able to identify any evidence to the contrary. This is not to say that such evidence does not exist.

German exchange students, I found, tend to struggle more significantly than the majority of international student (i.e. international Asian students) in most aspects of cross-cultural adaptation while studying in China. From the perspective of academic adaptation, Germans tend to struggle more than the Asian international students, especially with regard to understanding course content, adapting to teaching method, and adapting to the time and class size management currently operating in China.

Based on these finding, I argue, there are two main reasons for these different struggles. Germans tend to have more serious language barriers and more significant cultural differences from China, especially compared to those from Asia. Cultural differences, as used here, contain differences in the overall environment (e.g. smaller population and less traffic stress) and cognition (e.g. value system). As for the language barrier, my argument is supported by Yu and Shen's (2012), based on findings from their quantitative research on Chinese students studying in Australia. They identified a positive correlation between language skill and the degree of cross-cultural adaptation. They argue that weaker language skills cause struggles directly impacting on the individual student's possibilities for cross-cultural adaptation, including academic adaptation. My cultural differences argument is supported by Lei (2018), based on this study on western students' language learning struggles studying in China. He considered cultural differences, including value system, acceptation of power distance and learning culture, as the main reasons of western international students' struggles. Lei argues that cultural difference individualism and collectivism, higher and lover power distance and different learning cultures based on input and output, affected western international language learning struggles in China (Lei, 2018).

The struggle on understanding course content is closely linked to German exchange students' language barrier. Their struggle, I argue, was made even worse, by the fact that Chinese teachers, expected to use were generally not allowed to use English or the student's native language. University teachers are instructed to use the Immersion Language Teaching (ILT) approach, when teaching international students (Xu, 2017). Garone and Van de Craen's (2017) study on nurses' language learning in an internationalization perspective to some degree supported my argument. They argue that Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) tend to be a better approach in order for students to learn language and courses

content in the same process. The CLIL approach, if applied to my German case, would involve having a language teacher using Chinese and a content teacher using English/German both teaching in the same room at the same time. Based on Garone and Van de Craen (2017) findings, this method may have helped reducing struggle understanding course contents.

Seen from a slightly different angle, it has been argued in the relevant research literature, that international exchange students' struggles in academic adaptation are not caused purely by their own features, but also affected by the interacting and communication with domestic students and others. One such example concerns language learning. Lei (2018) who identified that different styles of communication as another important reason for western students' Chinese language learning struggles. Communication style refers to the preferences on the process of getting, explaining, filtering and understanding communication content (Norton, 1978, p. 99, quoted in Lei, 2018, p. 33). In my study, I chose to focuse on explaining German exchange students' struggles by looking at their specific features, such as language barriers, values and learning culture. Different styles of interaction and communication have not been covered in this study mainly due to limited resources.

From a sociocultural adaptation perspective, everyday life struggles and social life struggles were mapped mixing survey and interview data. I found that when German exchange students only faced minimal using daily life services, such as bank and laundry services. Comparing the findings from Qin (2017) and my own study, I found that it became clear that the Germans struggled more significantly than general international students when adapting to the student accommodation rules in China. On this basis, two arguments are put forward.

Firstly, I argue that the main reason why the Germans did not struggle much when using daily life services had to do with relatively good English language skills. This point of view is partly supported by new research done on Catalan/Spanish students' English skills, and shows that their command of English improved through studying in other non-English speaking European countries (Llanes, Arnó, & Mancho-Barés, 2016). Their research showed that even in non-English speaking environments, international students still have to practice English a lot in their daily life, especially when not mastering the native language of the hosting country. Sufficient English skill, acquired before or during exchange, helps them reducing potential areas of struggles mastering their daily life.

Secondly, the main reason for German exchange students struggling more significantly adapting accommodation rules, compare to the majority of international students (Qin, 2017) was identified as the cognitive cultural differences, i.e. the conflicts between their individualistic cognition and Chinese's collectivist cognition. However, explaining sociocultural adaptation struggles purely by analyzing their cultural differences from the Chinese, has been considered as incomplete by other scholars in the field.

For example, as I understand it, Crano and Crano provided an alternative framework for analyzing factors affecting international students' sociocultural adaptation (Crano & Crano, 1993, quoted in Chen, Ou, & Wang, 2015, p. 23). They classified these factors into six categories: former education, domestic hosting environment, language, experience, interpersonal communication, and socializing. Based on their analysis using Crano and Crano's framework, Chen and her colleagues identify three reasons for international students' struggles with daily life. Firstly, there is an internal reason, which refers to international students' personal features. Secondly, there is an external reason, which refers to the domestic environment and people in the hosting country. Thirdly, there is an interacting reason between the former two reasons (Chen, Ou, & Wang, 2015, p. 23). For the purpose of this current study, I chose mainly to focus on the first reason, namely German exchange students' personal features.

Taking a sociocultural adaptation perspective, quantity and quality of contact with host nationals is considered an important factor affecting international students' adaptation (Bochner, 1982, quoted in Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008, p. 65). Drawing on the emerging findings from my survey and the follow up interviews, two of several identified struggles are discussed, concerning the German's contact with domestic students. One of the struggles was the difficulty finding an interesting topic to talk about. The other struggle was understanding Chinese humor. Because of these perceived limiting factors, their socializing with domestic students tended to be superficial, making it hard to build friendships, i.e. being accepted into a friendship community.

One reason for this, I argue, was that the social network sites commonly used by the Germans, such as Facebook and Twitter, are blocked in China. Chinese have their own social network sites, as described earlier. Not using the same social networks provided creates a potential widening gap between popular what counts as socializing topics.

Research on online social support for international students studying in China (Wang, Hong, & Pi, 2015) supports my argument. Their quantitative research confirmed that there is a positive correlation between online informational support and international students' sociocultural adaptation. Informational support, in their words, "relates to the advice, guidance, and suggestions provided to international students in an online context" (Wright, 2002, quoted in Wang et al, 2015, p. 115). As I understand their argument, the contents on social network sites is seen as a kind of informational support, advising international students which topics could be interesting to talk about while socializing with domestic students, and therefore reducing struggle. Foucault-Welles′s (2016) study on Chinese students′ adaptation studying in the US also confirms that the particular environment of social network sites in China may cause struggles for international students' cross-cultural adaptation.

Due to the lack of accessible shared topics to talk about, it is no wonder why the interviewees said their socializing with domestic students were superficial. This, as I see it, is a quiet common struggle. Kim and McKay-Semmler's (2013) research on educated non-native Americans' socialization, claimed that even for these non-native American mainly socializing with Native Americans, still tend to struggle on building deep friendship with natives. They are more likely to build deep friendships with people from the same home culture. Therefore, struggling building friendship with domestics you meet when living abroad, is actually not a unique struggle for German or international students in China. This struggle tend to be general. Culture, which you are familiar with, is likely to be the important factor affecting friendship building.

Another struggle German students faced involved differentiating Chinese students' real opinions and their frequent use of euphemistic expressions as a way of avoiding upsetting people. I argue that this struggle can be somewhat explained using Hall's (1976) theory of high *vs.* low sociocultural context. Research comparing the differences between Chinese and American ways of expressing friendship and romantic relationship, using a high-low sociocultural context framework, also drew a similar conclusion (Bello, Brandau-Brown, Zhang, & Ragsdale, 2010). Bello et al. (2010) found that the high-context cultural way of expression, the Chinese way in this case, relies significantly more on a non-verbal than a verbal way, whilst the low-cultural context way of expression tends to use less non-verbal expression than the high-cultural context way. Therefore, as I see, it is no wonder why German students, who are not used to non-verbal expression as Asians are, struggled a lot,

understanding what Chinese students exactly would like to express. According to Williams, "effective intercultural communicators must have an understanding of cultural communication differences" (2005, p. 359).

The intercultural communication competence framework underpinning the argument presented in the last paragraph. The framework contains three dimensions: the cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Kim, 1991, quoted in Williams, 2005, p. 359). The cognitive dimension, which was included in my study, refers to "an individual's interpretive mechanisms or structures that assign meaning to messages" (Kim, 1991, quoted in Williams, 2005, p. 359). This cognitive dimension, as part of the intercultural communication competence framework, can, as I understand it, be used in a similar ways as the high-low continuum in the sociocultural context framework (Hall, 1976).

International exchange students tend not to be mixed with domestic students during class and housing, and due to this their chances to socialize with Chinese students is therefore limited. This situation, I argue, leads to the German exchange students feeling somewhat isolated. Leutwyler and his colleagues (2017), in a comparative study covering Bulgaria, Switzerland and South Africa focusing on internationalization of teacher education, identified several aspects, including to what degree campus had been internationalized (Leutwyler, Popov, & Wolhuter, 2017, p. 68). They found that campuses remained monolingual and monocultural habitus (2017, p.75). Based on my findings, I argue that some of the international students exchange programs in China tend not to be international in the sense that the Chinese students were not intergrated in the daily life of international students, neither in class, nor in the student accommodation. This is in line with Leutwyler et al. conclusion. Therefore, international students are likely to be "isolated" amongst themselves, rather than embedded into domestic students study and friendship communities.

This isolation, as shown in Chapter 4, is caused mainly by structural, economic and practical issues, for which the hosting universities are responsible. Though campus internationalizing has many challenges, domestic students tend to feel that working with international students can be a positive experience (Jones, 2010). Williams suggests that "as we create study abroad programs or receive international students, we need to find ways to facilitate their interaction with the people of their host culture" (Williams, 2005, p. 370).

Based on the overall findings, and given the struggles facing German exchange students in China, I full agree with Willams suggestion.

In this chapter, some of the main findings in this study have been discussed, drawing on international researches and theoretical frameworks providing a wider view of the struggles and the reasons for them. A brief summary of the answers to the research questions of this study are presented in the next and last chapter.

6 Summary

Using a mixed-method research design the main aim of this study was to explore for what reasons do German exchange students in China face different struggles in their in-school material life. In order to answer this problem, the following three research questions were developed. Firstly, what struggles do German bachelor exchange students perceive they have in their in-school material life studying in China? Secondly, how much perceived differences are there between German bachelor exchange students′ struggles and general international students? Thirdly, why do these struggles and differences appear?

The struggles that German exchange students faced when studying in China were mapped by two dimensions according to cross-cultural adaptation theories: academic and sociocultural adaptation. Academic adaptation dimension refers to their study life struggles, and sociocultural adaptation dimension refers to two sub-aspects: daily life struggles and social life struggles. German exchange students struggled more or less in all three aspects.

Their study life struggles contain difficulties understanding academic course contents, adapting to the big class size and the teacher centered teaching method in China, and struggling with the class time generally starting from 8 a.m.. They also showed a relatively low interest for, and therefore struggling with the content of cultural courses about traditional Chinese culture provided by the host universities. Their daily life struggles include significant difficulty of adapting to the student accommodation rules in Chinese universities. In addition, but not as marked, the study identified struggles getting particular food (milk products, especially cheeses) and using daily life services. Their social life struggles refers to difficulties socializing with domestic students, including struggles getting the chance to socialize with them, breaking the ice, finding topics, and understanding domestic students' euphemistic expressing properly.

Being compared with the struggles of the general international students group in China, where international Asian students are in majority, German exchange students tend to struggle somewhat more in the aspect of study life. In the everyday life aspect, their struggle with obeying accommodation rules also tend to be more significant than that of the international students in general, whilst their struggles on buying daily life necessities and using daily life services seem to be less significant. The Germans' struggles socializing with domestic

students came up as more significant than the majority of international students, except for the struggle with language barrier.

The possible reasons identified for such struggles and differences were classified into three groups drawing on social learning theory: environmental reasons, cognitive reasons and behavioral reasons. Environmental reasons refer to the environmental differences between Germany and China. In this study, environmental reasons include but are not limited to, public traffic and traffic congestion, class size, input/output type of learning. Cognitive reasons refer to cognitive features of individualistic, low context cultural, and lower acceptation of power distance. Behavioral reasons mainly refer to language skills, including Chinese and English. It also includes the skill of understanding non-verbal language, more specifically, understanding euphemistic expressions. German exchange students' struggles are caused by a combination of environmental, cognitive and behavioral reasons, rather than any one single reason. The various reasons interact and affect each other in a dynamic system, according to social learning theory.

German students' struggles identified in this study focused mainly on their particular features. As mentioned in previous discussion, these reasons tend to be incomplete, in that this study was focused on the internal, not so much on external and interacting reasons. Specific features of the hosting universities and the domestic students, and the interaction between domestics and internationals may also provide reasons explaining why German students face such particular struggles. Future studies in this field of research could benefit from focusing on and including external and interacting reasons. Finding ways to reduce and perhaps solve these mapped struggles requires future comparative studies.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1:Questionnaire of online survey(skipping logic achieved by online system signed out)

how was your study life in China

This survey is belonging to my master degree research on the struggles that German students meet while studying and living in China for short term exchange. The survey will take you 10-15 mintues to answer. It will not collect any personal data. Thank you for answering.

Unit 1 Background

1. Have you been to China for exchange?

A. Yes B. No (invalid respondent, finish the survey)

2. When were you on exchange in China?

A. Earlier than 2016 (invalid respondent, finish the survey) B. 2016 or later

3. Are/were you a bachelor student when you went on exchange in China?

A. Yes B. No (invalid respondent, finish the survey)

Unit 2 School Study

1. Was there any Chinese language certification request to go on exchange in China?

A. No B. Yes, please figure out which kind of language certification_____

2. How was your Chinese language skill before going to China?

A. Beginner B. Independent user C. Advanced user D. Native speaker

3. While studying in China, courses for international students are taught in which Language?

A. English B. Chinese C. Both English and Chinese

4. For those courses taught in Chinese, how many percent of the content could you understand?

A. Less than 30% B. 30%-50% C. 50%-80% D. More than 80%

5. Did you have any courses together with local Chinese students?

A. Yes B. No (skip Q6)

6. For those courses took together with Chinese students, how many percent of the content could you understand?

A. Less than 30% B. 30%-50% C. 50%-80% D. More than 80%

7. How many class hours on average did you have per day in China?

A. Less than 2 hours B. 2-4 hours C. 4-6 hours D. More than 6 hours

8. How do you feel with the class hours?

A. There are too many courses. It is too stressful

B. The class hour is satisfying for me, neither too many nor too few

C. There are too few courses. I prefer to learn more by school study.

D. Other opinion, please figure out _____

9. About the class time in general, your earliest class starts at_____ (time) and latest course finishes at _____(time) in China. (Please fill in numbers)

10. How do you feel about the class time? (multiple choose)

A. Early classes starts too early. I feel tired

B. Late classes finishes too late. I don't have enough free time after classes.

C. Other opinion, please figure out _____

D. I'm satisfied with the class time. (This opinion is mutually exclusive with A, B and C)

11. About the class size, most of your courses are small group class, medium group class or big group class?

A. Small group class (lass than 15 students)

B. Medium group class (15-30 students)

C. Big group class (more than 30 students)

12. How do you feel about the class size?

A. I prefer to have bigger class size.

B. I prefer to have smaller class size.

C. I'm satisfied with the class size I have in China.

D. Other opinion, please figure out _____

13. How do you feel about teachers' teaching method while studying in China?

A. It is too lecture style and teacher-central. I'd like to have more activities and chances to talk.

B. There are too much activities. I'd like to get more knowledge from the teacher instead of spending time on group works or talking.

C. Lecture and activities are combined well together and I'm satisfied with the teaching method.

D. Other opinion, please figure out _____

14. About the courses content, while studying in China, you have courses relevant to which aspects in the university. (multiple choose)

A. Chinese Language B. Traditional Chinese culture C. Modern Chinese culture

D. Politic and society of China E. History of China F. Chinese literature

G. Youth of China H. Others _____

15. Were the course content interesting for you?

	Very interesting	Interesting	Boring	Very boring	N/A
Chinese language					
Traditional Chinese culture					
Modern Chinese culture					

Politic and society of China					
History of China					
Chinese literature					
Youth of China					
Others					

16. Are there any course interesting for you but the university does not provide? (multiple choose)

A. Chinese Language B. Traditional Chinese culture C. Modern Chinese culture

D. Politic and society of China E. History of China F. Chinese literature

G. Youth of China H. Others _____

Unit 3 Daily life

1. While studying in China, you live in which kind of accommodation?

A. Student housing provided by university. (answer Q2-Q5)

B. Home stay provided by university.

C. Other kinds of accommodation provided by university. Please figure out _____

D. Accommodation not provided by university (answer Q6 and Q7)

2. The student house you live in is for international students only or mixed with local Chinese students?

A. Only for international students B. Mixed with local students

3. If you can choose, would you like to live together with local Chinese students?

A. Yes B. No

4. How do you feel about the school accommodation rules in China?

A. Some rules are too strict and violating my freedom

B. It is a bit strict, but acceptable for me

C. I'm very satisfied with the rules

D. The rules should be more strict

E. Other opinion, please figure out _____

5. Does the Chinese university ask you to follow these rules below?

	Yes	No	I don't know exactly
Access limit during night time			
Stop using electric/hot water/internet during night time			
No opposite-gender visitor allowed			
No pets			
Noticing the care-taker for being absent over night			
No high power household applications allowed (such as electric iron, hair dryer, electric kettle etc.)			

6. Does the Chinese university provide student housing for you?

A. Yes, but I prefer to live in other accommodation B. No

7. Why do you prefer living in other accommodation than living in housing provided by university?

A. For a cheaper price B. For a better living condition C. For more freedom

D. Other reason, please figure out _____

8. Are there any stuffs (including food and daily necessities) that cannot be found and bought easily in China made trouble on your life?

A. Yes, please figure out _____ B. No

9. Do you meet any struggles on shopping and using daily life service (taking public transport, using bank service, buying phone card, etc.) because of language barrier in China?

A. Not problem at all.

B. Meet some struggles, but still possible to solve the problem by myself by using English, electric translator or body language in addition

C. Meet a lot of struggles, I cannot solve the problem by myself and had to ask for help from Chinese people

D. Other opinion, please figure out _____

Unit 4 Social life

1. While studying in China, with whom do you usually spend your free time? (Please order these opinions by frequency from high to low)

	order
With other German students	
With other international students	
Alone	
With local Chinese students	
With local Chinese who are not students	
With other foreigner who are not students	

2. Do you have any struggles on getting possibility to socialize with local Chinese people? (multiple choose)

A. We are not mixed with local student and can seldom meet them. (having different classes, living in different places, study in different campus etc.)

B. I try to social with Chinese people but feel like they don't want to socialize with me somehow. (people whose answer include this option answer Q3)

C. I am not confident on my Chinese language skill, so I am not able to seek for chances of socializing with Chinese people

D. Other struggle, please figure out _____

E. I don't have any struggle on getting a chance to social with Chinese people. (This option is mutually exclusive with A, B, C and D)

3. What is the reason Chinese students don't want to social in your opinion? (multiple choose)

A. Chinese students are indifferent/unfriendly

B. Chinese students are too busy

C. We can hardly break the ice and start social

D. Other reason, please figure out _____

4. Does the Chinese university create any school events for international students to meet up and social with local students?

A. Yes (answer Q5) B. There might be some but I didn't hear about any C. No

5. Do those events work well on helping international students social with local students?

A. Yes, a lot. B. A bit, but not that much as expected C. No. D. I didn't participate.

6. While social with Chinese people, did you meet the struggles below?

	Yes, a lot	A bit, but alright	Not at all
Can hardly find an interesting topic for both			
Can hardly understand Chinese people's humor			
Can hardly understand Chinese people's thoughts and behavior due to value system differences			
Language barrier			
Difficulty on differentiate real opinion and euphemistic expression			
Other struggle, please figure out _____			

The survey is finished and thank you very much for your kindly help!

Would you like to participate an interview (takes about 30min) about the struggles you figured out and get some reward?

A. No B. Yes (sentences below show up)

Thank you for being interested in taking the interview.

I'm not allowed to collect personal data, so I cannot contact you by asking you leave your contact. Please leave a short mail to [redacted]@gmail.com with the date and time you would like to take the interview and I will reply you very soon. It makes a bit trouble and I'm honestly sorry and greatly thankful.

Appendix 2 links

Link of the “suchmaschine für studiengange” of Zeit Campus:

https://studiengaenge.zeit.de/

Appendix 3 NSD's Assessment

NSD NORSK SENTER FOR FORSKNINGSDATA

NSD's assessment
Project title

Issues German exchange students meet while studying in China
Reference number

964731

Registered

22.08.2018 av Yinan Sun - yinans@student.uv.uio.no

Data controller (institution responsible for the project)

Universitetet i Oslo / Det utdanningsvitenskapelige fakultet / Institutt for pedagogikk

Project leader (academic employee/supervisor or PhD candidate)

Unni Hagen, Unni.Hagen@hiof.no, tlf:

Type of project

Student project, Master's thesis

Contact information, student

Yinan Sun, /@163.com, tlf:

Project period

02.09.2018 - 01.06.2019

Status

19.10.2018 - Assessed

Assessment (1)

19.10.2018 - Assessed

Our assessment is that the processing of personal data in this project will comply with data protection legislation, presupposing that it is carried out in accordance with the information given in the Notification Form and attachments, dated 19.10.2019, as well as dialogue with NSD. Everything is in place for the processing to begin. NOTIFY CHANGES If you intend to make changes to the processing of personal data in this project it may be necessary to notify NSD. This is done by updating the Notification Form. On our website we explain which changes must be notified. Wait until you receive an answer from us

before you carry out the changes. TYPE OF DATA AND DURATION The project will be processing general categories of personal data until 01.06.2019. LEGAL BASIS The project will gain consent from data subjects to process their personal data. We find that consent will meet the necessary requirements under art. 4 (11) and 7, in that it will be a freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous statement or action, which will be documented and can be withdrawn. The legal basis for processing personal data is therefore consent given by the data subject, cf. the General Data Protection Regulation art. 6.1 a). PRINCIPLES RELATING TO PROCESSING PERSONAL DATA NSD finds that the planned processing of personal data will be in accordance with the principles under the General Data Protection Regulation regarding: - lawfulness, fairness and transparency (art. 5.1 a), in that data subjects will receive sufficient information about the processing and will give their consent - purpose limitation (art. 5.1 b), in that personal data will be collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes, and will not be processed for new, incompatible purposes - data minimisation (art. 5.1 c), in that only personal data which are adequate, relevant and necessary for the purpose of the project will be processed - storage limitation (art. 5.1 e), in that personal data will not be stored for longer than is necessary to fulfil the project's purpose THE RIGHTS OF DATA SUBJECTS Data subjects will have the following rights in this project: transparency (art. 12), information (art. 13), access (art. 15), rectification (art. 16), erasure (art. 17), restriction of processing (art. 18), notification (art. 19), data portability (art. 20). These rights apply so long as the data subject can be identified in the collected data. NSD finds that the information that will be given to data subjects about the processing of their personal will meet the legal requirements for form and content, cf. art. 12.1 and art. 13. We remind you that if a data subject contacts you about their rights, the data controller has a duty to reply within a month. FOLLOW YOUR INSTITUTION'S GUIDELINES NSD presupposes that the project will meet the requirements of accuracy (art. 5.1 d), integrity and confidentiality (art. 5.1 f) and security (art. 32) when processing personal data. To ensure that these requirements are met you must follow your institution's internal guidelines and/or consult with your institution (i.e. the institution responsible for the project). FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROJECT NSD will follow up the progress of the project at the planned end date in order to determine whether the processing of personal data has been concluded. Good luck with the project! Contact person at NSD: Kajsa Amundsen Data Protection Services for Research: +47 55 58 21 17 (press 1)

Appendix 4 List of interview dates

Josch	12th October, 2018
Joyce	3rd November, 2018
Nina	15th November, 2018
Mengna	11th February, 2019