



**Direct Entry into the Penultimate Year of Undergraduate Study:  
Exploring Perceptions of Transition and Oral Communication.**

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## **Abstract**

As UK universities strive to maintain their global outlook, numbers of international students matriculated into UK Higher Education continue to increase. While much research has focussed on transition into postgraduate study and the first year of undergraduate study, the need to investigate direct entry onto a course at a later point in the programme remains. The aim of this research is to explore student and tutor perceptions of transition into the penultimate year of undergraduate study, with a sub-focus on oral communication. A qualitative approach was employed to meet these aims. Drawing on relevant literature from the fields of international and direct entry transition, this study uses a community of practice framework to situate participants' perceptions of joining a group of continuing students. It also utilises a legitimate peripheral participation framework to describe how students became acculturated to their new academic environment. Semi-structured interviews with nine students and three tutors were carried out and course data analysed. Although student experiences were diverse, findings from this small-scale study reveal that transition into a new social and academic culture was challenging, particularly the transition and integration into an already established group of peers. Data also suggests that continuing students play an important role in socialising newly-arrived students into the new academic culture. The main conclusions drawn from this study are that international direct entry students would benefit from a thorough induction programme which outlines departmental expectations of oral communication and course practices. Furthermore, this research suggests that direct entrants' integration into the already established community may be assisted by more formalised introductions to staff and students on their courses at the start of the penultimate year of study. Such practice could aid integration and help establish newcomers as valuable members of their discipline community.

*Keywords:* international transition, direct entry transition, community of practice, legitimate peripheral participation, oral communication

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## **List of abbreviations**

<b>2+2</b>	Two years of study in home country and two years of study abroad
<b>CoP</b>	Community of practice
<b>CSE</b>	College of Science and Engineering
<b>DE</b>	Direct entry
<b>EAP</b>	English for academic purposes
<b>FE</b>	Further education
<b>HE</b>	Higher education
<b>L1</b>	First language
<b>LPP</b>	Legitimate peripheral participation
<b>NES</b>	Native English speaker
<b>NNES</b>	Non-native English speaker
<b>SFC</b>	Scottish Funding Council
<b>SSI</b>	Semi-structured interviews
<b>UG</b>	Undergraduate
<b>UKHE</b>	United Kingdom higher education
<b>WTC</b>	Willingness to communicate



## **1. Introduction**

The introductory chapter provides general background information, a description of my motivation and the need for the study. It ends with an outline of the structure of this dissertation.

### **1.1 Background**

In recent years there has been a steady increase in the number of international students matriculated into UK universities (HESA, 2016; UKCISA, 2017). Higher education (HE) institutions rely on income from these students, who bring many benefits such as diversity on campus and global connections (Spencer-Oatey, 2013; Trice, 2003). HE institutions are responsible for ensuring international students' successful completion of studies (Coertjens, Brahm, Trautwein & Lindblom-Ylance, 2017). Therefore, increased understanding of the challenges faced by international students is essential for improving their study experience.

This study focuses on a particular subset of international student, the international direct entry (DE) student. DE students are those who have either entered HE from a further education (FE) institution or another HE institution with a partnership agreement. Credit from studies undertaken at the initial institution are accepted and transferred to the new course. Such agreements between international HE institutions are becoming increasingly common (Heffernan, Morrison, Basu & Sweeney, 2010); therefore it is necessary to understand international DE student experiences. In this study, international DE students are those who enter university in the penultimate year of undergraduate (UG) study. I define an international student as an individual who studies in a country in which they do not have citizenship or permanent residency.

Much research has focussed on general transition into the first year of UG study (Allan, Clarke & Jopling, 2009; Briggs, Clark & Hall, 2012). Participants in such studies have expressed concerns about language proficiency, establishing friendships and becoming acculturated to university expectations and procedures (Clark & Hall, 2010; Leese, 2010). However, research into UG DE studies through international institutional agreements remains scarce. International students entering the penultimate year of UG study may face the same challenges as international students, but must also deal with extra challenges

faced by DE students such as becoming quickly acculturated to the new institution and joining an already established peer group (Pike & Harrison, 2011; Quan, Smailes & Fraser, 2013).

### **1.2 Motivation for the study**

In my institution, the College of Science and Engineering (CSE) offers one such international DE programme called a 2+2 agreement in which students (hereafter referred to as 2+2s) complete the first two years of their UG degree in China and the final two years in the UK. There are currently agreements between my university and nineteen universities in China with the possibility of more being added in the near future.

I recently became the co-ordinator of the four-week Pre-sessional for Undergraduate Students catering specifically to 2+2s. This course is designed to help students transition into the new academic culture. This is done through teaching skills in university writing, listening and note-taking, academic reading, seminars and workshops, and academic vocabulary. The pre-sessional course aims to raise students' awareness of the skills and tasks that their peers have been practising over the preceding two years. In my capacity as co-ordinator I am responsible for designing and developing course materials and liaising with CSE. Therefore, from a personal professional perspective, part of the reason for focussing on 2+2 students was to enable me to gain a better insight into their transition experiences and how our pre-sessional can best prepare them. This is especially important if the 2+2 programme expands as planned.

### **1.3 Aims and rationale of the study**

The aim of this study is to explore perceptions of DE transition into the penultimate year of study with a sub-focus on oral communication. Research on international students' academic transition has tended to focus on development of writing skills rather than the oral academic socialisation of international students into UKHE (Duff, 2007). Students such as DE 2+2s are expected to participate in oral communications of varying types; presentations, group projects, tutorials; lectures; and laboratory work. Furthermore, it is increasingly common to see oral participation during a course as a subset of evaluation (Duff, 2010). Many qualitative studies in the fields of transition and academic adjustment focus on student perceptions. Fewer have researched teacher perspectives despite Morita and Kobayashi (2008) stating the need for multiple viewpoints. For these reasons, I have chosen

to explore both student and tutor perceptions of transition and oral interactions on their courses.

I chose a qualitative approach using interviews to gather data. I met with nine students and three tutors involved with the 2+2 programme in my university. Additional course data was collected to understand the expected communicative outcomes of students' programmes. Data was collected over a two-week period at the end of the academic year.

Insights from this study are likely to be applicable to other groups of international students joining UKHE. An Internet search reveals that many UK universities offer student exchanges where non-UK students can spend between one semester and two years in a partner institution. Issues related to transition from non-English speaking countries onto a programme with English as the medium of instruction are likely to be relevant to these visiting students. Therefore, this research, which touches on transition and socialisation, is potentially relevant to a much wider audience outside the 2+2 programme in my institution.

#### **1.4 Outline**

The literature review in Chapter 2 provides a justification for and an overview of the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study, namely community of practice (CoP) and legitimate peripheral participation (LPP). It draws on transition literature, focussing on international and DE transition. In Chapter 3, the methodological approach and research methods are presented and justified. Limitations of a qualitative approach that utilises semi-structured interviews (SSIs) as a research instrument are acknowledged. Chapter 3 also outlines the context of the study and the participants. The results and discussion in Chapter 4 focus on transition into the third year of UG study, challenges of oral communication, and how the CoP and LPP frameworks can be applied to students' experiences. Chapter 4 ends with a discussion of implications and recommendations in light of the data I collected and acknowledges limitations of the study. Chapter 5 concludes the study by highlighting the main findings, specifically the need for more explicit instruction from tutors as well as a substantial induction programme. Finally, recommendations for further research are put forward.

## 2. Background

This chapter describes how I chose the theoretical framework for the study and provides an overview of relevant literature. The research questions are stated at the end of the chapter.

### 2.1 Choosing the framework

From an institutional perspective, I was aware of the financial benefits 2+2s bring to my university. However, I wanted to learn more about the student experience, specifically what it is like to join an established group in the third year. This section explains how I moved from an academic discourse socialization approach to the more appropriate CoP approach for this research.

In language socialization theory, cultural knowledge and knowledge of a community's practice is gained through use of situate-appropriate language that enables participation within discourse communities and consequently increases language knowledge (Duff, 2010). As exemplified by Vickers (2007), a sociocultural framework in which there is expert-novice interaction is ideal for measuring situated communicative competence. Vickers' observational study of the socialization of US engineering students effectively shows how novices were familiarised with CoP practices through team interactions with more experienced peers. To accurately research the oral academic discourse socialisation of students, observing participants engaging in oral interactions is the most suitable method of collecting data. Unfortunately, at the time of my data collection, observing 2+2s interacting with more experienced peers was not possible. Therefore, while I recognised the benefits of the socialisation approach, the limitation of absent observations meant an alternative theoretical framework might be more appropriate for this research.

Reflecting on the literature I had read, a CoP perspective was frequently utilised to discuss academic discourse socialisation (Leki, 2001; Morita, 2004; Vickers, 2007). Further reading around CoP showed that although it was not initially intended for application in the field of second language education, it had been successfully applied to this field (Haneda, 2006). As I was interested in finding out perspectives regarding entry into an already established *community* of learners, CoP proved a suitable framework to employ. Furthermore, Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of LPP offered a method to describe the extent to which students perceived they had successfully accessed and joined their discipline community.

## **2.2 Literature review**

This section begins with an overview of the CoP and LPP frameworks. Following this is a focus on international and DE transition. The sections on transition outline the similarities and differences between international and DE transition, helping to contextualise the experiences of participants in this study. Furthermore, there is a focus on international students' perceptions of oral communication during their sojourns.

### **2.2.1 Community of practice framework**

As a theoretical framework, CoP has been implemented across a variety of disciplines from language learning to workplace practices (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2004; Morita, 2004). It has been applied to the field of language learning in studies that view learning as socially situated, culturally-embedded, and temporal (Cho, 2004; Leki, 2001; Morita, 2004). The term was first implemented by Lave and Wenger (1991) in their seminal work on situated learning, where they explained, "A community of practice is a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (p. 98). In other words, a CoP is a social concept describing the sustained interaction of groups of individuals with shared interests and endeavours.

Lave and Wenger (1991) were criticised for leaving CoP "largely as an intuitive notion" (p. 42). As a response to criticism, Wenger (1998) sought to refine the framework and explained that not every social group can be defined as a CoP, insisting that we cannot give too precise a definition of the term: "Calling every imaginable social configuration a community of practice would render the concept meaningless. On the other hand, encumbering the concept with too restrictive a definition would only make it less useful" (p. 122). It is this vagueness in defining a CoP that lends the concept strengths and weaknesses (Cox, 2005; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2004). We can apply the term CoP to a variety of situations and groupings but it is difficult to establish whether groups are being labelled accurately as CoPs. Wenger (1998) does provide a list of indicators of a CoP (p. 125-6); however, these appear to be more oriented to a business rather than educational field and it is unclear how many factors need to be present for a group to be labelled a CoP.

Although much literature on second language learning refers to CoPs, few articles provide a clear definition CoPs. Leki (2001) and Morita (2004) are two researchers that do define CoPs. Leki's study of interactions between NNEs and NESs during group projects in an English

dominant country appears to refer to each group as a separate CoP. In her study of the socialisation of Japanese postgraduate students in Canada, Morita refers to each classroom environment as a separate CoP as social relationships in each classroom are not static. However, overall, could be said that like Lave and Wenger (1991), much of the literature presents CoP as an intuitive notion.

Lave and Wenger's (1991) conceptualisation of a CoP requires sustained interaction and members with shared interests and endeavours. With this in mind, Leki (2001) is correct to label a group working on a sustained project as a CoP. Moreover, Morita's (2004) class group is also a CoP as all members endeavour to successfully complete their course. From a wider perspective, the label CoP could also be applied to students within the same discipline working to complete a degree programme. It is also possible to describe the international student community as a CoP as they have the shared interest of studying overseas. Finally, all members of a university could be said to have a shared interest in working for or graduating from that institution. Therefore, my conceptualisations of a CoP range from small groups to disciplines within an institution, as well as the wider international and university community. This allows me to look at both the macro-picture of my University without losing out on the smaller picture of micro-communities made up of individuals (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2004). It also highlights the notion that an individual may be a member of several, possibly overlapping, CoPs and recognises that disciplines within the same institution have differing practices and expectations. See Figure 1 for a visual depiction of one individual's membership in multiple CoPs.

Integration into a CoP is not limited to the academic confines of university life. In their large-scale study at a US university, Lee and Rice (2007) report that international students felt that integration with home students was denied when they were not invited to social activities outside their classes. Although there was no consensus, it was suggested that language proficiency was a contributing factor. However, it has been suggested that language alone does not impede integration, but factors such as communication skills, age, and maturity play a role (Montgomery, 2010).

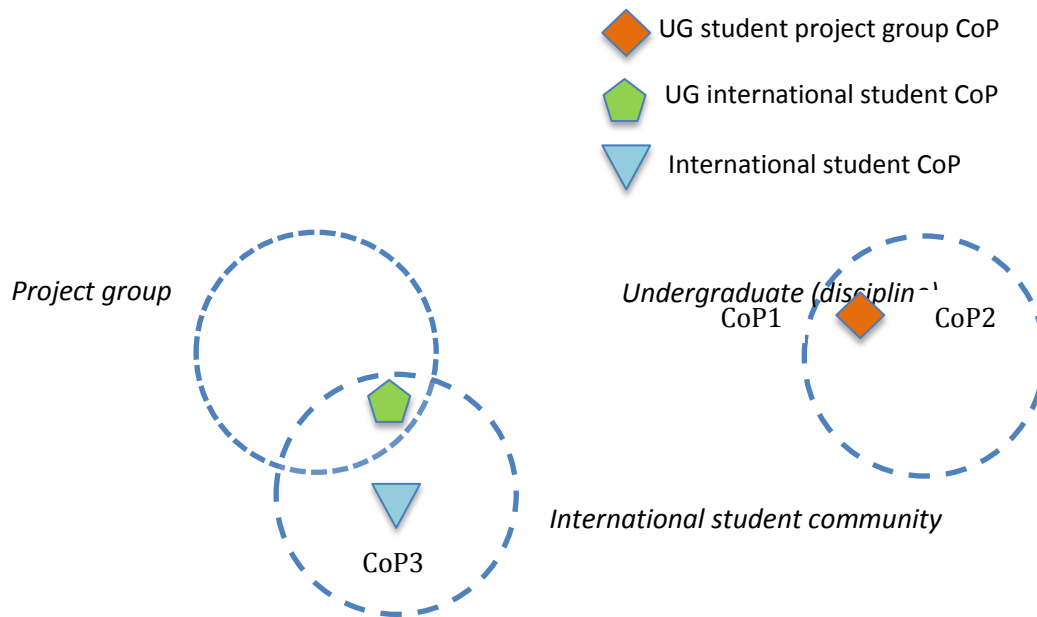


Figure 1. Example of the same individual's multiple CoP membership. The diamond represents membership of a UG student project group, the pentagon a UG international group, and the inverted triangle an international student group.

Literature suggests that international students tend to create their own broader CoP when studying abroad (Haliç, Greenberg & Paulus, 2009; Montgomery, 2010). Reasons for these international CoPs include drinking culture, living abroad, and cross-cultural interest. Firstly, the drinking culture in some Western universities can cause reactions of discomfort amongst international students (Lee & Rice, 2007, Montgomery, 2010). A second suggestion is that international student CoPs arise from a shared understanding of living in a different culture (Montgomery, 2010). Finally, it is thought that international CoPs may develop when home students have a lack of interest in NNEs cultures (Lee & Rice, 2007).

In short, CoPs can take a variety of forms and sizes. Integration into a CoP can be affected by multiple factors, from language proficiency to divergent cultural practices. This may result in international students creating their own CoP.

### 2.2.2 Legitimate peripheral participation

In order to join a CoP, the individual must become an apprentice and engage in the process of LPP (Lave & Wenger, 1991). LPP has been successfully applied to educational settings, for examples see Kobayashi (2003; 2016), Leki (2001), Morita (2000, 2004), Ridley (2004), and

Toohey (1998). This socially-situated apprenticeship describes the manner in which newcomers, or novices, develop their identities and increase their knowledge and skills by learning from old-timers or experts within the CoP. Novices initially sit on the periphery, watching and learning from the CoP experts. After a period of observation, newcomers are assigned low-stakes tasks and are eventually able to move from the periphery towards full participation. See Figure 2 for a visual depiction of LPP into a CoP.

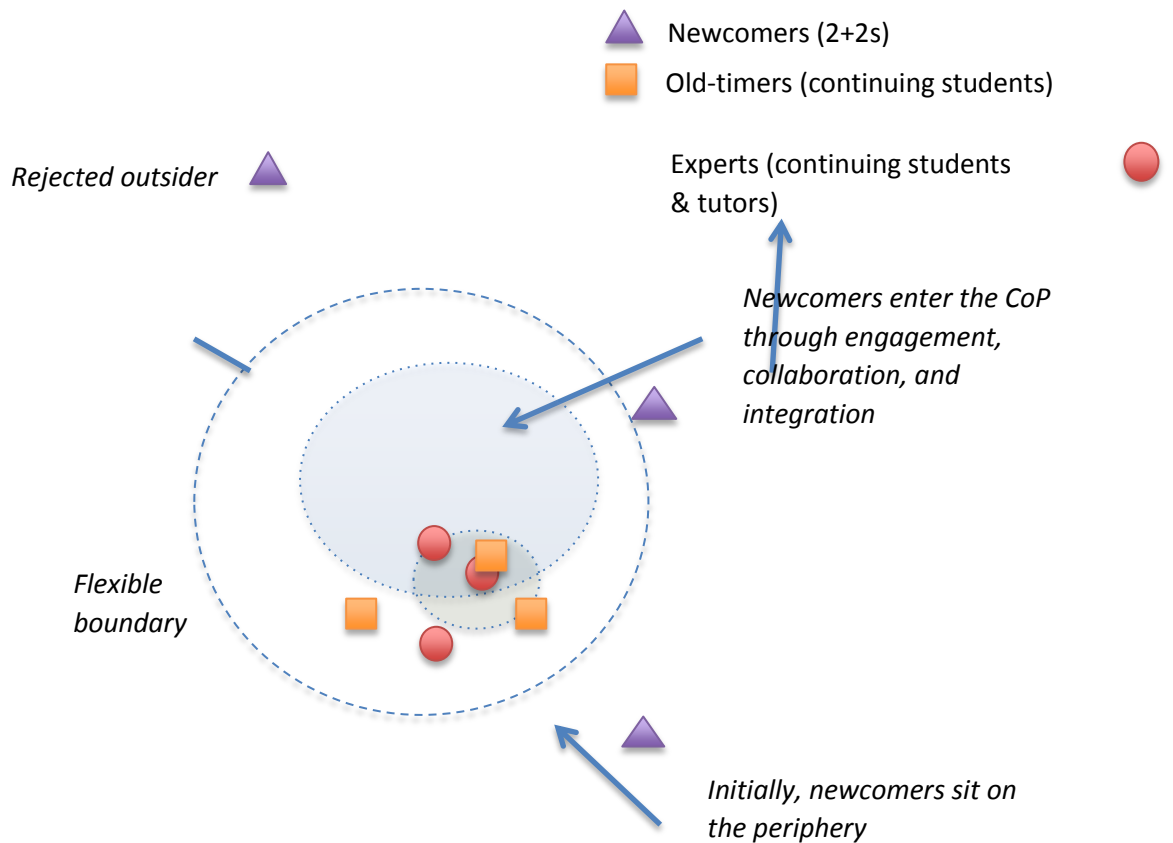


Figure 2. A simplified depiction of legitimate peripheral participation within a community of practice. The legend represents individuals in this research: the triangle represents newcomer 2+2s, the squares represent old-timer continuing students, and the circles represent expert tutors.

Like CoP, LPP has been criticised for insufficiently defining concepts and failure to recognise conflict. Although LPP seems easy to understand and of relevance to socially situated learning, there are times when the LPP framework comes across as unformed or a work in progress. When focussing on individual points such as defining concepts, the reader would benefit from more explicit and fully-formed explanations. For example, more detailed



definitions of the individual terms *legitimate*, *peripheral*, and *participation* may better clarify the theory. This is a point expounded by Haneda (2006), who suggests that the term *participation* does not sufficiently define, critically evaluate or distinguish different types of learning.

The next key criticism comes from Duff (2007), who describes LPP theory as benign and therefore not representative of many learning contexts. In the process of LPP, an individual gains power as participation increases. Full participants, or experts, have the power to withhold information or prevent a newcomer from joining the CoP. Although Lave and Wenger (1991) acknowledge that “unequal relations of power must be included more systematically” (p. 42), there remains a sense that they have failed to address a major tenet of their theory. Within HE, power struggles may be seen through imposing a mode of teaching or learning (Benesch, 2001), between tutors and students within a discipline (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006), or amongst peers within a class or group project (Leki, 2001). In failing to consider such power struggles fully, LPP appears to present an idealised overview of learning that fails to recognise possible conflicting relations between participants. Morita’s (2004) report of students participating in multiple CoPs can be used as a case in point to show that a perceived power imbalance has a significant effect on both identity and participation. Within different CoPs, Morita’s participants felt varying degrees of peripherality and legitimacy. Their ability to access the CoP was a result of a variety of factors, namely language, knowledge, culture and identity. The complex negotiations of interaction evident in Morita’s study are not sufficiently recognised by Lave and Wenger. One could go as far as to criticise Lave and Wenger of overlooking unequal power relations as a deliberate way to idealize their theory. Despite these criticisms, LPP does offer a useful framework for describing an individuals’ entry into a community.

The LPP framework can be applied to groups of learners and offer an explanation for the positioning of individuals within a group. Leki (2001) uses the LPP apprenticeship model to explain how NNES novices interacted with more experienced group members and learned through engagement. Using self-reports, Leki found that in the study abroad context, NNESs felt they were positioned as peers who did not have valuable contributions to make, and were therefore viewed as less capable. NNESs struggled to assert themselves as valuable contributors within their groups as they lacked cultural and historical knowledge. This echoes later findings that a lack of content knowledge (Morita, 2004) and insufficient

cultural capital (Gu, Schweisfurth & Day, 2010; Ridley, 2004; Vickers, 2007) can disadvantage NNEs. Leki (2001) reports how one participant was viewed by her group as a burden and was given easy tasks where “the costs of errors are small” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 110) reducing her to marginal group membership. Leki is keen to point out that NNE participants had alternative viewpoints that might have been valuable contributions but a lack of collaboration and opportunity for access prevented such input. Leki suggests lower English proficiency leads to unconscious bias regarding intellect and recommends that tutors carefully plan and direct group work allowing NNEs to be seen as valuable contributors and assist them in contributing equally. Leki further proposes that in some instances there may not be an expert within a group to act as apprentice’s guides, however, she presupposes that the guide is willing to engage with the apprentices. Despite this limitation, Leki’s study successfully highlights how language and power can prevent legitimate participation within mixed L1 groups.

The expert-novice interactions we see in Leki’s (2001) study are also evident in Haliç et al. (2009), Ho (2011), and Morita (2000). Haliç et al. (2009) describe how postgraduate students arrived from communities in which they were full participants to a new community where they were perceived as non-legitimate contributors on the periphery. Their movement to full participation was a result of interaction with more experienced CoP members and the ensuing increase in language proficiency. Whereas Haliç et al. present rather a linear process, Ho (2011) found that the variety of life histories within groups of postgraduate TESOL students led to individuals switching between expert and novice roles. Morita (2000) presents us with a more fluid representation of the expert-novice relationship in her study of an oral academic presentation course. At the beginning of the course, instructors acted as experts, eventually relinquishing control to the class where there were “moment-by-moment negotiations of expertise among participants who contributed different knowledge” (2000, p. 302). From these studies, we can see that expert-novice interaction is varied and our role as expert or novice is not necessarily static.

A further theme is that of feeling marginalized or positioned as an outsider when access to a HE CoP through LPP has been denied. Morita (2004, pp. 588-589) describes the experience of one participant who felt international students were ignored and the instructor unwilling to intervene. This theme of international students feeling isolated and on the outside is also evident in Lee and Rice (2007). They use the term *neo-racism* to describe the cultural

intolerance and marginalization uncovered during their research. Results from these studies show us that cross-cultural experiences can lead to non-dominant groups feeling powerless and alienated.

However, feeling like an outsider to a CoP is not limited to international students studying in a Western environment. Dunne's (2009) research suggests that NES home students in Ireland also felt like outsiders when engaging in CoPs made up of different cultures. Factors hindering integration from the host students' point of view included language barriers, large classes, monocultural group work, anxiety related to penetrating monocultural groups of international students, and a fear of being rejected by these groups. When host students did interact with international students, they were concerned that NNEs would not understand them, their slang or their humour. Furthermore, host students felt that communication was unsatisfactory despite their attempts to accommodate their speech by avoiding certain slang terms, reducing speed of speech and accent. From this study it can be concluded that NNEs are not alone in their fear of rejection or being cast as an outsider. It could be said that when faced with a CoP made up of international students, home students perceive themselves to be on the periphery.

To summarise, individuals engage in a variety of CoPs at any one time. Furthermore, joining a CoP through LPP can be affected by power imbalances, language proficiency, content knowledge, and cultural differences. LPP should therefore be recognised as a complex process rather than benign.

### **2.2.3 International transition**

Literature on international transition of Chinese students into HE tends to focus on three main areas: language proficiency, academic transition, and social adaptation. Language proficiency is said to play an important role in the adjustment of international students (Zhou & Todman, 2009). Level of proficiency may result in lower oral participation in the unfamiliar practices of class discussions and group work (Ferris & Tagg, 1996) as students feel they are unable to express themselves clearly in spontaneous speech (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Haliç et al., 2009; Hennebry, Lo, & Macaro, 2012). Furthermore, international students may struggle to follow fast-paced dialogues and non-standard accents (Morita, 2004; Wu & Hammond, 2011). Therefore, without sufficient time to prepare utterances, Chinese students are more likely to remain quiet in seminars and group work. For example,

Schweisfurth and Gu (2009) found more than one third of UG students were “worried about speaking up in class discussions” (p. 467) and anxiety about speaking in group discussions had risen from 2 per cent pre-arrival to 18 per cent three months after their arrival. Similarly, in Zappa-Hollman’s (2007) case study of the academic discourse socialization of NNEs graduates in Canada, open discussions that followed planned academic presentations caused great anxiety for NNEs. This reticence has been confirmed by academic staff who describe Chinese students’ participation in oral communication as lower than their NES counterparts (Hennebry et al., 2012). Moreover, instructors seem to be aware of the impact divergent academic culture may have on ability to interact orally to the extent that they may avoid whole-class discussions (Kim, 2006).

Research has shown that reticence and silence are situation specific and it has been suggested that language proficiency is only one factor affecting Chinese students’ willingness to communicate (WTC) in oral discussion. Other factors include confidence, topic, familiarity with education practices and interlocutors, and group size (Cao & Philp, 2006; Hashimoto, 2002; Lee, 2009; Nakane, 2006). Through self-reports and observations of NNEs, Cao and Philp (2006) discovered that participants believed larger group sizes resulted in decreased WTC as did working in groups with unfamiliar peers. However, it was also evident that self-reported WTC and observed WTC did not always match, showing that student perception may not reflect action. Regarding reduced WTC, Ollin (2008) points out that social theories of education promoting interaction presume that if a student is not speaking then they are not engaged. If this is true, silence may not show disengagement, it could be face-saving or a form of protest (Tatar, 2005; Nakane, 2006). Reticence and silence are likely to be situation specific and not a result of cultural background and to look at groups of students as homogeneous could lead to stereotyping (Harris, 1997; Scollon & Scollon, 1995; Zhou, Knoke, & Sakamoto, 2005).

Differences between academic culture in China and the UK have been well documented, often focussing on the Confucian practice of memorisation and recitation in contrast to the Western Socratic philosophy of questioning and challenging ideas (Andrade, 2006; Gu, 2009; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). However, literature suggests Chinese education practices are transforming, resulting in less of a divide (Cross & Hitchcock, 2007; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Kingston & Forland, 2008). Despite these possible transformations, adapting to the expectations of a divergent academic environment can be a cause for worry. This is evident

in findings from Gu et al. (2010), which show that after arrival, UKUG students' concerns regarding understanding lecturer's expectations had more than doubled from 10 per cent pre-departure to 27 per cent. Gu et al. (2010) further report increased anxiety related to speaking in front of a group and working in small groups post-arrival.

It may be beneficial for divergent cultural groups to gain a better understanding of different cultures of learning in the hope that increased understanding leads to more effective teaching and learning experiences (Cross & Hitchcock, 2007). Wu and Hammond (2011) suggest that to adjust to the new institution, international students should adopt the academic beliefs of the host university. Furthermore, Kim (2006) suggests tutors should provide clear explanations of the value of spoken interaction. With regards to aiding transition and socialisation into a new oral academic culture, these studies suggest instructors should be explicit about expectations and practices.

Regarding social transition, lower language proficiency and a cultural divide might hinder students making new friendship networks as poorer listening and speaking skills can negatively impact interaction. In their research on integration into a UK university, Harrison and Peacock (2007) found that lower language proficiency led to international UG students developing closer relationships with other international students rather than home students. Similar findings can be seen in Wu and Hammond's (2011) study of East-Asian postgraduate students in the UK. Turning to cultural divide, participants in Wu and Hammond (2011) and Montgomery (2010) describe how drinking alcohol and socialising in pubs was important if you wished to develop friendships with home students. International students in both studies described how differing social practices can cause difficulty in establishing friendships with home students, echoing the aforementioned findings by Lee and Rice (2007).

To summarise, low English proficiency can cause anxiety in oral interactions and while silence may have multiple causes, language proficiency is an important factor. To aid adjustment into the new academic culture, instructors should be explicit about expectations and practices. Finally, the challenges of social transition should not be underestimated.

#### **2.2.4 Direct entry transition**

Much of the literature on challenges in DE transition into the penultimate year of study refers to the transition from FE to HE. Focussing on academic transition, having spent the first one or two years studying in a different institution, DE students tend to feel as though they have missed out on course content leaving them feeling less qualified than their peers (Morgan-Klein, 2003). Furthermore, DE students may not have sufficient experience of independent study or classroom practices of the new institution, meaning a rapid adjustment to the new academic culture is necessary (Pike and Harrison, 2011). Added to this, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) (2005) reported that teachers do not always know whether students are new to the university and therefore support is not offered to them.

Turning to social transition, DE students express concern about creating friendship networks and integration (Christie, Cree, Hounsell, McCune and Tett, 2006; Morgan-Klein, 2003; Pike & Harrison, 2011). Moreover, DE students tend to experience social isolation (Trim, 2001). Tait and Godfrey (2001) found that DE students feel isolated as there is “no recognisable peer group with which to identify” (p.261). This is a relevant concern as friendship networks are said to be an important factor in adjustment to a new culture and there may be a relationship between adjustment and interaction with host nationals (Furnam, 1997). Indeed, Elliot, Reid and Baumfield’s (2016) study of PhD students in the UK suggests that finding friendship in host cultures assists acculturation as friends can guide and explain academic practices.

### **2.2.5 International direct entry transition**

Bringing the two themes of international transition and DE transition together, international DE students face a complex transition from their home institution to the new international institution. Students must adapt quickly to the new, more independent academic environment, whilst overcoming any gaps in content knowledge. As well as this, international DE students face the challenge of integrating into an already established year group, which may be especially challenging if their English language skills are not proficient enough.

Unfortunately, there is a paucity of literature within this field. This is surprising considering the increasing popularity of such transnational university agreements (Dunworth, 2008). I was able to locate only one study focussing on international DE transition into students’ disciplines. Quan et al. (2013) investigated the transition of international DE students into

UKHE by interviewing Chinese students, programme leaders and directors from the Chinese universities sending the students. In this study we can see similarities with literature on international and DE transition. Unsurprisingly, the new teaching style was difficult to adjust to, as was the limited time in which they had to adjust. Directors in China acceded that practices such as group work were not undertaken in China, and perhaps closer cooperation was needed between institutions in China and the UK to expose DE students to such teaching activities. Interestingly, unlike other international students and FE DE students, participants in Quan et al.'s study did not have the same feelings of isolation. This was because the students tended to come from the same agreement universities and had already established *intra-networks* from studying together in China. Quan et al. conclude that intra-networks alleviate some of the social transition challenges of international DE students even though it can prevent integration with other students. Intra-networks may therefore lead to the possible disadvantage of students socialising less outside of their networks, resulting in a longer adjustment period (Zhou & Todman, 2009).

#### **2.2.6 Supporting international direct entry students**

Taking into account the results from Quan et al. (2013), we can draw on literature from international and DE transition when considering support for international DE students. Accessible support is essential to help international DE students navigate the academic culture of UKHE and help students excel academically in the new institution (Barron & D'Anunzio-Green, 2009; Pike & Harrison, 2011). Kim (2006) recommends organising meetings pre-matriculation with more experienced international students who can share knowledge of the new academic culture. Another possible solution is to implement a bridging module or separate induction to ensure mutual understanding of expectations between DE students and academic staff. Tait and Godfrey (2001) evaluated an FE bridging module that teaches independent study skills, oral and written communication, and library and exam skills. Continuing students and DE students interacted prior to the DE students joining the course full-time. The module received positive feedback and achieved its aims of helping direct entrants overcome feelings of isolation and 'otherness' experienced when joining an already established peer group. However, unless adapted to be online, such a module is only applicable to DE students already residing in the country of the HE institution they are joining.

Another possible method of reducing the transition anxiety of international DE students is with a pre-sessional course. Similar to a DE bridging module, a pre-sessional takes place prior to students joining their discipline full-time. Discipline specific courses are most beneficial in familiarising students with the academic practices of their institution (Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland & Ramia, 2008). Moreover, such courses are said to be enjoyable and a means of creating friendship networks (Wu & Hammond, 2011).

Finally, pre-arrival curriculum matching could ensure DE students have the required content knowledge for their course (SFC, 2005). This would entail greater partnerships between transfer institutions as recommended by Christie et al. (2006), Morgan-Klein (2003), and Pike and Harrison (2011).

Overall, we can see that transition into a new academic culture brings many challenges. Both DE and international students may have to adjust to new academic practices and may face social isolation. Lower English proficiency could make it difficult to narrow the social and cultural divide. DE students also tend to feel inferior, and face the challenge of joining an already established community. International DE students such as UG 2+2s are likely to face all of the above challenges and must quickly switch from the academic culture of their first two years of study into the new academic culture of their final two years. There are two possible methods of easing this transition for 2+2s. Firstly, better communication between agreement universities and secondly a pre-sessional course that provides training for the new academic culture.

### **2.3 Research questions**

In an attempt to address gaps in the current literature on international DE and oral academic socialisation, this research explores student and tutor perceptions of transition into the penultimate year of a new academic culture, with a focus on their experiences of oral interaction. The three research questions are as follows:

1. What are student and tutor perceptions of international direct entry transition?
2. What are student and tutor perceptions of the challenges involved in oral communication?
3. How might international direct entry and oral communication affect accessing and joining a community of practice?



While questions 1 and 2 allow me to investigate student and tutor experiences of transition and oral communication, question 3 is designed to situate accounts within existing theory.

### **3. Methodology**

This Chapter outlines a justification of the chosen research method. Following this are details of participants and the research context. The section ends with a description of the data collection process and data analysis. During the data collection and analysis phase, I endeavoured to follow Dörnyei's (2007) quality criteria to ensure validity and reliability.

#### **3.1 The qualitative approach and semi-structured interviews**

Qualitative research has a social constructivist grounding which "draws strongly on direct experience" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p219). Such research is often small-scale, concerned with the individual and seeks rich insights and deeper understanding (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Cohen et al., 2011). Furthermore, qualitative enquiry allows the researcher to take an emic perspective and understand phenomena from the subjects' perspective (Kvale, 2007). In researching the views and experiences of the individual we can create meaning from social interactions (Cohen et al., 2011) and give a voice to the participant (Dörnyei, 2007; Kvale, 2007).

Kvale (2007) describes interviews as "an inter-view where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee" (p. 1). He further states that the researcher is central to such qualitative enquiry, whether by presence alone or reflexivity. SSIs use a series of systematic open questions or prompts as a guide and are flexible enough to allow the interviewer to explore issues further (Dörnyei, 2007; Kvale, 2007). This means that the interviewer can guide the participant and "maintain a systematic coverage of the domain" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 143). Furthermore, topics can be probed, examples sought and the interviewer is able to clarify responses and reformulate answers to ensure understanding and correct interpretation (Kvale, 2007).

Limitations of qualitative SSI data collection must be acknowledged, particularly the generalizability of results and researcher influence. In qualitative SSI research, the focus on the individual and the context as well as the small sample size can make generalizability questionable beyond the specific context of the study (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). In

response to this criticism, Kvale (2007) explains that interviews do not seek generalizations but “transferability of contextuality and knowledge from one situation to another, taking into account the heterogeneity of social knowledge” (p. 87). Cohen et al. (2011) also suggest that enquiry may be generalized to specific settings beyond the research site. In other words, findings from this study may also be relevant to institutions with similar DE programmes.

Researcher values can also influence qualitative studies so self-awareness needs to be exercised and possible bias identified (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Regarding qualitative data, this means ensuring that findings are grounded in data and contextualized. In SSIs, there is a chance that the presence of an interviewer can result in the halo effect, that is the participant self-editing or saying what they think the interviewer wishes to hear (Mackey & Gass, 2005). This must be kept in mind when interpreting data.

Further limitations of SSIs relate to time, unintentional omission, and reduced comparability (Cohen et al., 2011). Firstly, a great deal of time is required to interview and transcribe data. Secondly, there is a chance that relevant topics are not present in the guide and important information may be missed. Finally, the flexible nature of an SSI and differences in question sequences can make it difficult to directly compare interviewees answers.

Despite these acknowledged limitations, my choice of qualitative approach is supported by the chosen area of enquiry and research aims: understanding the perceptions and experiences of UG 2+2 students transitioning from one academic culture to another. I chose to use SSIs as a research instrument as they were the most suitable method to gain relevant data to answer the research questions. In addition, SSIs have been utilised in similar studies seeking to explore individual perspectives (Lee & Rice, 2007; Leki, 2001; Morita, 2004; Quan et al., 2013). Moreover, as a result of the paucity of literature on international DE transition, this research aims to broaden the understanding of this area, and, as Dörnyei (2007) explains, a qualitative method suits research that is exploratory in nature.

### **3.2 Context and participants**

The 2+2 programme was briefly outlined in Chapter 1 to establish the context of the study. More detailed programme information can be found in Appendix A. This section provides a basic overview of the research site and participants, see Tables 1 and 2 for further participant details.



Table 1

Student participant information including the course they were matriculated into, interaction patterns in China and the UK, and sizes of project groups in the UK

Name (pseudonym)	Year	Course	IELTS speaking	Interaction in China (tasks)	Interaction in China (people)	Interaction in UK (tasks)	Interaction in UK (people)	Group project sizes UK
<b>Aote</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Geosciences	6.0	Lab	Tutors/ teammates in lab (4-5 people)	Fieldwork Group projects Lab Tutorials Workshops	Demonstrator Peers Tutors	4-8
<b>Max</b>	4 <sup>th</sup>	Engineering	5.5	Lab Lecture Q&A	Lab partners Lecturer	Lab Lectures Group projects Tutorials	Demonstrator Lab technicians Lecturer Peers	5-6
<b>Stephan</b>	4 <sup>th</sup>	BEng	5.5	Lab Lectures Tutorials	Lab partner Tutor Peers Tutor after lecture	Group projects Lab Presentations Poster Q&A Tutorials	Demonstrators Peers Personal tutor PhD students Supervisor Peers	6-8
<b>Ben</b>	4 <sup>th</sup>	BEng	5.5	Classes Lab Lectures	Peers Lecturer Demonstrator	Group projects Lab Lecture Tutorials	Demonstrator Lecturer Peers PhD students Tutor	6
<b>Sam</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	BSc Chemistry	5.5	Lab Lectures	Peers?	Group projects Lab Poster presentation Tutorials	Demonstrator Peers PhD students Tutors	3-6

(Table 1 continued)

<b>Karen</b>	4 <sup>th</sup>	BEng Hons	5.0	Lectures Tutorials (lecture style)	-	Group project Lectures Tutorials	Demonstrator Peers Personal tutor	6
<b>Arthur</b>	4 <sup>th</sup>	Mathematics and Statistics	6.0	Lab Lectures	Lecturer	Group projects Lab Lectures Tutorials Workshops	Peers Personal supervisor	4-7
<b>Sherlock</b>	4 <sup>th</sup>	Engineering	5.5	Lab Lectures	Demonstrator Peers	Group projects Lab Tutorials	Demonstrators Peers (Chinese) Personal Tutor	5-8
<b>Luke</b>	4 <sup>th</sup>	BEng	6.0	-	-	Group projects Lectures Tutorials	Personal Tutor Peers	3-8

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Table 2

Tutor participant information including departmental entry requirements for 2+2s and interaction types that take place on their courses

<b>Name</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>2+2 IELTS requirement</b>	<b>UG IELTS requirements (from 1<sup>st</sup> year)</b>	<b>Pre-sessional course attendance</b>	<b>Interaction on course (tasks)</b>
<b>Tutor 1</b>	Biosciences	5.5 minimum (6.0 overall)	5.5 minimum (6.5 overall)	If IELTS below 7.0 overall	Lab Lectures Group projects Presentations Tutorials Presentations Small-group teaching
<b>Tutor 2</b>	Geosciences	5.5 minimum (6.0 overall)	5.5 minimum (6.5 overall)	If IELTS below 7.0 overall	Field trip tours Group work (pairs to whole group) Lab Lectures Seminars Supervisor meetings Workshops
<b>Tutor 3</b>	Geology	5.5 minimum (6.5 overall)	5.5 minimum (6.5 overall)	If IELTS writing below 6.0	Field trips Group work (pairs and small groups) Lab Lectures Personal tutor Presentations Supervisor meetings Tutorials

*Note: Any information that may identify tutors (such as specific modules) has been omitted to maintain confidentiality.*

The study took place at a leading UK university. The 2025 strategic vision of the institution is to retain its global outlook and increase international student numbers. Over 25,000 UG students attended the university in 2016/17, around 35 per cent of which were international students. Just over 6,000 UG students were matriculated into the School of Science and Engineering in 2016/17, however, the proportion of international students is not known.

Convenience and purposive sampling methods were used to select participants (Dörnyei, 2007). All participants were required to meet the criteria of being either a 2+2 student or tutor in my institution. Next, they had to be willing to participate and available for interview at the time data was to be gathered. After ethical approval was granted, I emailed all 2+2 students currently matriculated in my university inviting them to take part. I then emailed my contacts within each department that recruits 2+2 students asking them to circulate my request along with an attached information sheet to relevant tutors. The emails to students and tutors included a description of the research and assurance of confidentiality. A total of 124 students and six departments were contacted and nine students and three tutors participated in this research after giving informed consent (see Appendix B). Students were matriculated into a range of Schools: Engineering, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Geosciences. Tutors were from the Schools of Geosciences, Biosciences, and Geology. Eight student interviews were face-to-face in a private classroom space and one was via Skype as the participant had already returned home to China. The tutors were interviewed in their offices on campus. Pseudonyms are used for each participant to maintain confidentiality. Each student participant chose their own pseudonym and the tutors were labelled T1, T2, and T3.

### **3.3 Data collection and analysis**

My SSI guide was based on the broad aims of the study and the research questions. Initial questions were designed to relax the participants and gain background information. Later questions were based on themes from the literature or were student led, based upon previous answers. See Appendix C for the interview guide. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed and Cohen et al.'s (2011, pp. 425-6) guidelines for interview conduct were followed. All participants had the opportunity to review the texts post-transcription and check for accuracy, however, no participants deemed this necessary.

Although topics from the literature were used as the basis for questioning, themes arising from the interviews were very much "grounded in the data" (Mackey & Gass, 2005). I read

the transcripts several times, highlighted and annotated key points and tabulated initial key points by participant. I undertook a second level of analysis to see if there were commonalities across participants (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). These commonalities were based on recurrence and absence and then cross-matched to the research questions.

Open coding was used to further analyse key points in the data. Units of data were coded and tagged using words and phrases that I had created. I went through transcripts line by line and placed codes next to the relevant text. The only non-coded data was background information or references to topics outside my research focus. See Appendix D for sample coded transcripts. Constant comparison was used when new data was collected (Cohen et al., 2011). Codes that were deemed too general were refined, for example, the initial code '*understanding*' was refined to '*understanding others*' and '*making myself understood*'. I did not limit analysis to frequency as "frequency does not equal importance, and not saying something (withholding comment) may be as important as saying something" (Cohen et al., 2011 p. 481). Main themes emerged from the 97 codes created. See Appendix E for a sample of code counts on the main theme of LPP.

I aimed for reliability and validity throughout. A colleague reviewed my interview guide for bias and leading prompts. In order to check the reliability of my coding, a colleague coded semi-random samples of data after three transcriptions had been completed. Samples that were relevant to the research questions were selected and the coding system explained. A simple percentage agreement showed that inter-coder reliability was 88 per cent.

Differences were all related to two initial codes, *international communication* and *speed of speech*. Figure 3 presents the refinement of ambiguous codes identified in inter-coding.

After discussing the coding issues of generality and similarity, I felt confident to continue coding the remaining data.

<b>Original code</b>	<b>Problem</b>	<b>Refined code</b>
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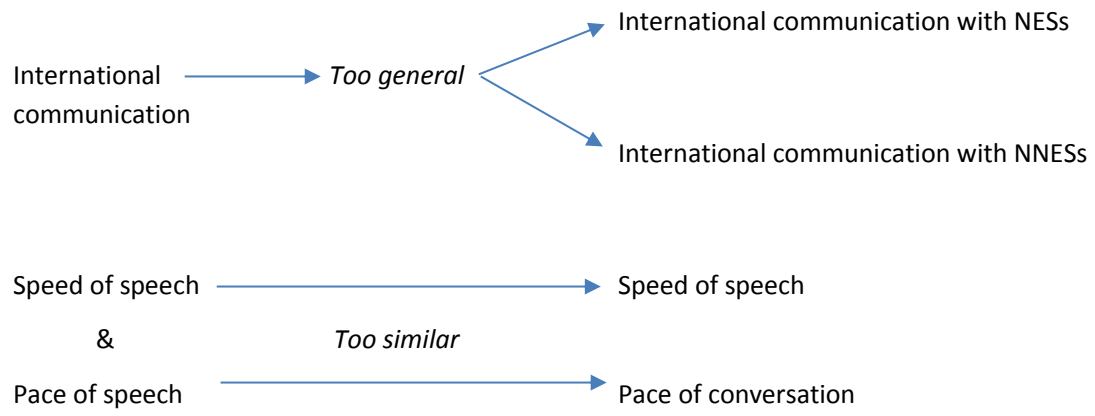


Figure 3. The refinement of ambiguous codes.

#### 4. Results and discussion

The results of my research are presented by research question. Tables allow the reader to see which participants refer to the themes discussed and interview extracts help provide more detail.

#### **4.1 What are student and tutor perceptions of international direct entry transition?**

This section presents results related to the theme of international DE transition from student and tutor perspectives, namely perceptions of joining an established group, integration, and divergent academic and societal cultures. See Table 3 and Table 4 for an overview of the participants that spoke about the topics related to this research question.

##### **4.1.1 Joining an already established group**

Five of the students interviewed admitted it was challenging joining an already established group. This endorses Morgan-Klein (2003) and Christie et al.'s (2006) assertion that integration into an existing network of peers can be difficult. By year three, continuing students had already established social networks and friendships as Arthur and Sherlock illustrate:

Arthur: They have study groups- and people study together and it's very efficient on, like, completing the assignments and I have to work on my own which is a little difficult.

Sherlock: They have been here and are together for two years and there's- actually at the beginning there's just a small group of people, and then there was about twenty of them in my major and then there's twenty Chinese come inside there, so it's like, at the beginning they know each other quite well and when it becomes a large group and there's not so many opportunity for me to talk to them.

Table 3

Overview showing the student participants that referred to issues discussed within the theme of international direct entry transition

Topic	Karen	Luke	Arthur	Sherlock	Aote	Max	Stephan	Ben	Sam
Difficult joining established groups	✓	--	✓	✓	--	--	✓	✓	--
No opportunities to integrate	--	✓	✓	✓	--	--	--	✓	--
Introduced to peers	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Interact mostly with Chinese	✓	--	--	✓	--	✓	--	✓	✓
International communication positive	--	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	--	✓	--
Tutorials/workshops/seminars new	✓	--	✓	✓	✓	✓	--	✓	✓
Group work new	✓	--	✓	✓	--	✓	--	✓	✓
Not understand academic culture	✓	✓	✓	--	✓	✓	✓	--	✓
Different culture (social)	✓	--	✓	✓	--	--	--	--	✓

Note:  
 ✓ indicates a participant referred to the relevant topic and -- depicts no mention.

Table 4

Overview showing the tutor participants that referred to issues discussed within the theme of international direct entry transition

Topic	T1	T2	T3
Introduces 2+2s to class/ year group	--	--	✓
Aware of divergent academic culture	✓	✓	✓
Tutor teaches group work skills to class	✓	--	--
Disadvantage joining 3 <sup>rd</sup> year	✓	✓	--
Peers welcoming	--	✓	✓

Note:

✓ indicates a participant referred to the relevant topic and -- depicts no mention.

Arthur was one of only two 2+2s to join his discipline, whereas Sherlock was one of around twenty but both felt the community they were accessing was already established. Furthermore, four participants believed there were limited opportunities to integrate, although Max felt that being “out from your comfort zone” may have been a factor, perhaps further exacerbating the feeling of otherness. Luke found the process of joining his discipline CoP particularly difficult:

Luke: They’re like a circle with a very strong wall and you can’t penetrate.

Interviewer: Do you feel like you’re trying to join the group but-

Luke: I was trying so hard to join the group but they’re like, I’m so busy, don’t try to speak to me.

In contrast to the above perceptions, five students felt there were sufficient opportunities to integrate, although it is unclear whether these were opportunities within their academic or social groups. For example, Ben felt, “There’s a kind of encouragement for other people to

make me to speak out my ideas”, and Karen claimed NESs adjusted their speech for her, “They didn’t use lots of accents or lots of words only in [local dialect] and when they talk with their [local] friends, actually when I heard their conversation I don’t understand”. This perception supports Dunne’s (2009) finding that NESs adjust their speech when communicating with international students. These positive experiences were echoed by two of the three tutors, with T2 describing the support one 2+2 student received when the continuing students “did study sessions for her”.

Aote’s experiences are more conflicting. Although she found the continuing students in her discipline CoP were happy to answer all her questions and lend her notes, she confessed feeling “so upset” that her peers preferred to ask other continuing students for help and not her. She explains, “They don’t talk with me if they have any problems... they will talk with each other, but they won’t talk with me... sometimes I have (ideas), even though they didn’t ask me, I will talk with them”. This is reminiscent of Leki’s (2001) assertion that NNEs were forced to take subordinate roles when they felt that full participation was possible. It could also be described as an example of how NNEs who ask questions rather than giving information are prevented from displaying technical knowledge (Vickers, 2007). Overall, we can see that perceived experiences of joining an established group were varied.

#### **4.1.2 Integration**

Analysis of data indicates that six 2+2s explicitly stated that they were not introduced to their peers when their courses began. The following exchange was typical of responses:

Interviewer: When you first joined in September, were you introduced to your classmates?

Sam: Oh (laughs). The lecturer didn’t provide such chance for us. We just attended the lectures as the other students.

Luke explained that on his course the 2+2s had to take the initiative, stating, “it really depends on you”, while Sherlock said that they were introduced to their peers “just in the group project” in semester two. It is possible that introductions did not occur because, as in the SFC (2005) report, tutors did not always know whether students in their classes were continuing students or 2+2s. As T2 explained, “Teaching a third year course, you’re not always aware of who’s a 2+2 student and who’s not”. To find out T2 would have to “go through each individual record”. Only T3 said that tutors in his department are “immediately

aware of who (2+2s) are” as they are informed by their registration team. T3s department formally introduced 2+2s to the year group with T3 explaining the possible future professional benefits of studying alongside students from a different country. These comments portray how departments within the same School can have very different practices.

Regarding integration in their discipline CoP, five 2+2s said they interacted more with Chinese students, three mentioning 2+2s specifically, and this is supported by tutor perceptions. For example, Sherlock said that on courses with more than one 2+2, “I will sit with some Chinese student...because if you were in a situation or an environment that you can speak Chinese, you will choose the easy one”. In addition, Sam explained, “At the beginning of the course we often do everything together”. Quan et al. (2013) suggested that intra-networks helped international direct entry students’ transition by alleviating the isolation some international students feel. This appears to be true to a certain extent in my research.

Remaining close to intra-networks may have been because old-timers did not always include the newcomer 2+2s in social plans. Both Stephan and Sherlock, who had just completed fourth year, reflected on their experiences:

Stephan: I can feel there is somehow a gap between the newcomers and exist, I mean the continuing students. For example, if they are doing a barbecue, it turns out like not tending to telling much of the 2+2 students.

Sherlock: (2+2s and continuing students) are close, much more close than used to be but there is still some distance. It’s like if someone will hold some parties or some other stuff actually they won’t invite Chinese student because they don’t know each other quite well.

This supports comments from home students in Dunne (2009) who admitted not inviting international students to join social activities. It also agrees with international students’ feelings of being left out of social events in Lee and Rice (2007).

Six 2+2 students appeared to establish friendships with international students in their disciplines rather than home students and found it easier interacting with international students generally. We can see in the coded data in Figure 4 that international students

were seen as more welcoming, easier to understand, and topics of conversation were more accessible. Furthermore, 2+2s perceptions of fast-paced speech agree with Morita (2004) and Wu and Hammond (2011) as well as Harrison and Peacock's (2007) assertions that language proficiency affects relationships with NESs.

Luke: **{international communication NESs -}** They (NESs) ignore you and that's the horrible part. But the **{international communication NNES +}** international students they don't usually do that.

Arthur: **{NES speed of speech -}** They (NESs) speak super-fast. The speed is difficult and that's why I don't, like, I don't hang out with the (subject) students pretty often but **{international communication NNES +}** speak more with the international students, because **{NNES speed of speech +}** they speak more slowly and the **{international communication NNESs topic +}** topics are more internationally so I can understand pretty well what they are talking about.

Max: They **{NES speed of speech -}** speak too fast, sometimes, at the beginning so I cannot get used to their speed.

Aote: When English native speaking speakers talk, I can't follow them. So I don't know what they are talking about, so I, **{outsider} I can't join discussion.**

Interviewer: What is stopping you from following them?

Aote: **{NES speed of speech -}** It's too fast. And some vocabularies I think.

Aote: Another problem is that when native speaks-, native students speak, **{international communication NESs topic -}** they talk about something I don't know. Yeah, for example, yeah, I had a party with them last night and they talked about the **{culture alcohol}** alcohol or some music, or some politics, but I'm not familiar with them. So it's difficult to follow, yeah. But when I talk with newer international students, **{international communication NNESs topic +}** I'm more familiar with the topics.

Interviewer: Was it easy talking with them?

Karen: Uh, yes. But sometimes when they **{international communication NESs topic-}** speak jokes I can't understand.

Interviewer: What kind of jokes?

Karen: Maybe some about sex or (laughs). It was another female and I think the others are male, and maybe one of them is gay.

Interviewer: Was this the first time you'd worked in a group?

Karen: Uh, yeah. I think **{group communication +}** it's funny and interesting. Because in China I seldom met this situation and here, well, I opened my eyes.

Figure 4. Coded interview extracts from student participants referring to international communication with NES and NNES students.

The codes have been placed within the data to show more clearly the text they correspond to.

#### 4.1.3 Divergent academic cultures

Although Jin and Cortazzi (2006) and Kingston and Forland (2008) referred to a changing education system in China, the students I spoke to did not appear to have experienced the

suggested developments in oral classroom interaction. It is important to remember that the 2+2 students had spent two years becoming socialised into the expected practices of their Chinese universities, and in third year they had to adapt to a very different system. The feeling of a divergent academic culture may have been intensified due to the transition occurring quickly, as illustrated by Karen, who described not having enough time to “change from Chinese style to British education style”. However, adjustment may not happen quickly enough, as Luke stated, “It’s like, at the end of fourth year I know how to do it now”. This is particularly concerning because, as T3 remarked, every module in third and fourth year counts towards their final grade. Overall, the experiences of the 2+2s in my study on the theme of divergent academic cultures support Quan et al.’s (2013) indication that adapting to a different learning style creates challenges.

During interviews, it became clear that one of the most agreed upon differences between academic culture in China and the UK was oral communication in tutorials, workshops, and group work. While two 2+2s had experienced group work in extra-curricular societies in China, six had never engaged in group work. Furthermore, seven had never experienced an interactive tutorial or workshop. Although a new experience, Max felt that “it makes us feel more close to our lecturers in the tutorials”. This shows that while 2+2s acknowledged the different academic practice, they did not necessarily have a negative perception of it. This suggests a renegotiation of the meaning of UG study through participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Adapting to a divergent culture that had a greater focus on communicative practice was perceived to be especially difficult due to a lack of instruction. As Karen stated, “I can’t really understand what I’m supposed to do”. When asking participants about their first experiences of group work in the UK, it seemed that the guidance given by tutors was related to the task content. Max described the tutor’s guidance as “technical advice”, Karen explained, “The lecturers split the project into different parts”, while Ben said, “There’s different stages for us to achieve”. From these responses, it can be inferred that no advice was given to 2+2s on group work skills such as individual roles, turn-taking and interrupting.

Although the tutors were aware of differences in academic culture, citing large class size, and memorisation or recitation of facts, they did not mention possible alien classroom practices such as group work, discussions and tutorials:



T1: The Chinese system is here's a bunch of facts, go memorise them.

T2: They're struggling with the different learning style.

T3: They're taught in much larger groups... they're told something in a lecture, you write down what's in the lecture, regurgitate that in an exam.

When asked whether they thought 2+2s were familiar with group work expectations and practices, T1 claimed to give instruction on group work skills and practice "time and time again" because he felt home students also needed reminding. T2s response was, "We have a lot of guidelines in the course book". The following interaction with T3 highlights a similar lack of guidance:

Interviewer: Before they start the group work, do you go through with them 'this is what we expect, this is how group work works, this is what you're supposed to do'?

T3: Probably not so much. I mean we kind of assume that our students-, we try to do a lot with them anyway in first and second year, so they know you're supposed to pull your weight in a group.

From speaking to 2+2s, the assumption that students know what they are expected to do is incorrect. Furthermore, by limiting group instruction to first and second year, 2+2s are excluded from such valuable training. As Morgan-Klein (2003) affirmed, DE at a later stage in the course appears to have resulted in 2+2s missing out.

This idea of 2+2s being disadvantaged was brought up by tutors. However, they felt the main disadvantages were due to gaps in content knowledge resulting from poor curriculum matching:

T1: The conceptual background both in terms of basic content and knowledge wasn't there.

T2: You can see these big gaps in their knowledge.

T3: It's difficult to know what training they've had.

Such comments are similar to findings by Morita (2004) and Wu and Hammond (2011). In both studies, limited content knowledge and new concepts were cited as challenges students had faced. In my research, the tutor comments also highlight the need for curriculum matching mentioned by the SFC (2005) as well as the need for increased communication between agreement universities to aid successful transition (Christie et al., 2006; Morgan-Klein, 2003; Pike & Harrison, 2011; Quan et al., 2013).

T1 also focussed on the academic socialisation disadvantage, explaining, “Some of our first year is not about teaching them... (it is) about socialising them into scientific culture and practice”. In other words, the initial stages of the degree acculturate students into UKUG scientific discipline, teaching them how to think and be more autonomous learners. Data therefore presents an interesting dichotomy. The tutors are aware that 2+2s lack some skills and content knowledge of their continuing counterparts and that 2+2s have not had the same socialisation, but there does not appear to be a system in place to address this.

#### **4.1.4 Divergent cultures**

Although interviews focussed on their academic experiences, 2+2s also tended to speak about their social cultural experiences. It seems that communication and integration are not limited to the confines of the classroom but, as Leki (2001) suggests, the social and academic aspects of student life are on a continuum. The following extract illustrates Ben’s perceptions of cross-culture communication:

Ben: There are some challenges. Since I think one of them is language barriers, and another one is cultural differences.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit about the cultural differences?

Ben: So, I think one point is that what we are thinking is, I think, instinctively different. So there’s something which I cannot change. So that’s it.

In total, three students referred to the different drinking culture, and two referred to peers discussing relationships and sex. As these were the main social differences mentioned, it might be inferred that they were the most prominent perceived differences between Chinese and British culture.

Arthur felt distanced from his peers in his discipline CoP who were, in his opinion, more interested in alcohol and flirting, “Local students they talk some rumours between students, between tutors and people’s career, and some I think for like flirting... and basically they drink a lot”. This is similar to international students in Lee and Rice’s (2007) investigation who felt that increased alcohol consumption as well as “open sexuality” (p. 397) resulted in feelings of isolation. Moreover, as Harrison and Peacock (2007) highlighted, repeated references to events from the preceding two years further alienated him, “Those people have stayed there already two years... they know what funny things happen to them”. Sherlock attended two parties shortly after arriving and explained, “[non-Chinese students] just feel so amazing that they say I’m not Chinese because all the Chinese don’t like to party”. From this we can see how non-Chinese students may have positioned Chinese students as a group of people who do not socialise or share the same social values.

Wenger (1998) explains that clear understanding is necessary when joining a community. If we do not follow jokes or accept social practices we are unable to become a full member of a CoP as there is no mutual engagement. This lack of mutual engagement could offer an explanation for some perceived differences in social culture.

#### **4.1.5 Summary**

In summary, joining an established group of students was perceived to be challenging and a lack of formal introductions possibly affected integration negatively. Differences in culture affected 2+2s transition both socially and academically. 2+2s also had to adapt to new academic practices on their courses and would have benefited from more explicit instruction from teachers. Having an intra-network of other 2+2s meant that students avoided isolation in the initial stages of transition. However, it is possible that these intra-networks resulted in delayed integration. Finally, at times, participants struggled to adjust to the social values of the host community.

#### **4.2 What are student and tutor perceptions of the challenges involved in oral communication?**

We saw in Chapter 2 that opportunities for spontaneous oral communication in the Chinese education system can be lacking (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Despite possibly having little

experience of speaking in English, UG 2+2s are expected to participate in discussion in their disciplines. To achieve discipline course outcomes (see Appendix F), 2+2s are expected to engage in coherent oral communication, and communicate and work effectively in groups.

Interview data reveals that although experiences of oral communication were mixed, there were common difficulties; proficiency, mutual comprehension during oral communication, and lack of confidence. It is likely that these difficulties affected 2+2s abilities to achieve programme communicative outcomes.

One of the possible causes of difficulties in spoken communication is proficiency. Low proficiency was commented on by T1 and T3, who mentioned that poor speaking skills were an issue. When looking at course data, it was interesting to see that the overall language requirements for a 2+2 student were lower than the requirements for a UG student starting in first year. If their NNES counterparts began in first year and had two years in which to improve their speaking proficiency, it is not surprising that tutors felt that in comparison 2+2s speaking proficiency was insufficient. Tables 5 and 6 provide an overview of the participants who referred to specific issues within the theme of oral communication challenges.

#### **4.2.1 Understanding: Accent, speed and pace**

One of the greatest challenges was being understood by their interlocutors. Seven participants referred to the challenge of making themselves understood, as illustrated below:

Arthur: I want to explain to them and I pushed myself really hard, I worked really hard and I think I've said everything but they like keep confused.

Luke: Sometimes you want to participate in but then they don't understand you- especially in the first year in the first semester.

It was not only difficult to make themselves understood, but it was also difficult understanding others. Two factors that stood out were accent and pace. Seven students described the difficulties of understanding "strong accents" that they had not been exposed to before. The 2+2s were obviously unprepared for the non-standard accents that they were

hearing, endorsing findings by Haliç et al. (2009), Wu and Hammond (2011), and Zhou and Todman (2009).

Table 5

*Overview showing the student participants that referred to issues discussed within the theme of challenges in oral communication*

Topic	Karen	Luke	Arthur	Sherlock	Aote	Max	Stephan	Ben	Sam
Not understand others	✓	--	✓	✓	✓	✓	--	--	--
Others not understand	✓	✓	✓	✓	--	--	✓	✓	✓
Accent	✓	✓	--	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	--
Speed and pace of speech	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	--	--
Confidence fluctuates	✓	✓	--	✓	--	✓	--	✓	--
Group size	--	--	--	✓	✓	✓	✓	--	--
Revert to silence	--	✓	✓	--	✓	✓	--	--	--

Note:

✓ indicates a participant referred to the relevant topic and -- depicts no mention.

Table 6

*Overview showing the tutor participants that referred to issues discussed within the theme of challenges in oral communication*

Topic	T1	T2	T3
-------	----	----	----

Challenge of speed and pace	--	--	✓
Silence	✓	✓	--
Integration	✓	✓	✓

Note:

✓ indicates a participant referred to the relevant topic and -- depicts no mention.

A further struggle was the pace of discussions and speed of speech, which was often too fast for 2+2s to understand. Max and Stephan expressed the difficulty of the fast pace of discussions particularly clearly:

Max: You have to come up with ideas very quickly and you also need to speak out your opinion very quickly. So once you lose the chance to speak, maybe you cannot speak, talk about the same thing again.

Stephan: They can be quite fast, or can go through things quick. You have to understand both sides, and you have to keep record of the conversation. That can be quite hard for me last year.

This was acknowledged by T3:

T3: It's difficult to interact dynamically in a group when you're not completely fluent. You can't keep up to speed and a lot of our students wouldn't necessarily understand that.

Consistent with Zappa-Hollman, (2007), student comments suggest that during discussions, 2+2s may perceive the need for increased preparation time. Moreover, Max illustrates the challenge of spontaneous oral communication that Jin and Cortazzi (2006) mentioned. T3 clearly recognises the challenge of fast-paced discussions that Morita (2004) and Wu and Hammond (2011) referred to. Although T3 mentioned that 2+2s are often assigned the same personal tutor so particular needs of the 2+2s can be addressed in a group session when necessary, it is not known whether coping with fast paced discussions was addressed.

#### 4.2.2 Confidence

Fluctuating levels of confidence depending upon the interlocutor was mentioned by five 2+2s. Max and Karen spoke about peers from Malaysia and Singapore who spoke both Chinese and English. Max described feeling “more comfortable and less pressured”, while Karen admitted using both Chinese and English “feels very open”. As in Gu et al. (2010), their increased confidence is likely because they could revert to their L1 should communication in English break down.

Moreover, perceived equal proficiency or higher proficiency appeared to result in increased confidence for three participants. See coded data in Figure 5.

Luke: When there are some **{NNESs confidence +} Chinese people and native speakers I speak more confidently**. It’s kind of like destroying others. If my flatmates are all English and they’re talking I will **{NESs confidence -} sit there and try to be more quiet**.

Interviewer: When you were working in groups, did you find it easy to participate?  
Sherlock: Yeah it is, because actually, they are in the group eight group people, there are actually four Chinese students including me and **{NNESs confidence +} I think my speaking is the best so that’s why**.

Max: Maybe I realised our English ability was at **{NNESs confidence +} the same level somehow, so I will not feel shy**.

Interviewer: So, sometimes when you think someone has a better English level to you, can that affect how you feel talking to them?  
Max: Yes a little bit. Because it **{confidence -} influence my confidence sometimes**.

*Figure 5.* Coded interview extracts from student participants showing perceived equal or higher proficiency leads to confidence in oral communications.

The codes have been placed within the data to show more clearly the text they correspond to.

As in Morita (2004) and Haliç et al. (2009), conversing with NESs resulted in anxiety related to accuracy. Ben mentioned feeling particularly worried about accuracy when speaking with NESs, but perceiving NNESs as more equal made communication less anxiety-inducing:

Ben: When I speak with students from other countries, it’s not so stressful for me, since their English is not so good as well, yeah. So that kind of situation is better to make me express more clearly.

Ben was aware that his speaking was not always accurate, but he described his group mates as “so encouraging and supporting”. This feeling was also expressed by Sam, who said, “They

are so willing to help me, I feel so good". From these extracts, it is clear that confidence in speaking can be context specific and dependent upon the interlocutors.

A preference for speaking in pairs or smaller groups was evident amongst four participants, agreeing with Cao and Philp (2006) that the size of the group appeared to affect confidence and participation. Three students specified that it was more appropriate to ask for repetition in one-to-one conversation:

Sherlock: If it's individual it's fine, but if it is a group of native speakers I feel it's really hard for me to join the group of them and they talk so fast. And if you stop them it's kind of a rude manner I think.

Aote: If I speak to a smaller group, if I can't understand, I will ask. And yeah. But in a big group, I don't.

Max: In one-to-one conversation you can always ask the other people to repeat...(in larger groups) the other people will understand the question very quickly... they head to next topic, so it's strange if you still want to go back.

Furthermore, Sherlock felt that if she interrupted a group, she would "lose face" and "the whole process will be slow down". The latter point was shared by Aote, "If I stop them, they will progress much slower". It appears these 2+2s were worried that asking too many questions would be a burden to the group. It may also be inferred that Sherlock was anxious about showing a lack of competence (Leki, 2001; Morita, 2004).

It is pleasing to note that as their courses progressed, 2+2s tended to gain confidence in their speaking and interaction with NESs became less anxiety-inducing. However, results from interview data suggest a need to consider whether initial integration into UKHE should initially focus on encouraging less anxiety-inducing interactions with international students rather than home students.

#### **4.2.3 Silence and reticence**

When struggling to communicate with peers, four participants admitted that they reverted to silence. Arthur's silence resulted from repeated failure to explain seminar questions to his



peers, “after (explaining) two or three times, I just gave up”. Aote’s tendency to “keep silent most of the time” was a result of not understanding her peers’ conversations and not wanting to interrupt group conversations. Luke’s silence was a reaction to perceived rejection, and could be interpreted as a form of protest (Tatar, 2005; Nakane, 2006), “when I speak they just ignore me and I thought OK, if you ignore me, I have no passion to keep on speaking”. Finally, Max remained silent when NESs discussed unfamiliar topics that “you cannot join”. As Morita (2004) discovered, silence amongst 2+2s was often context-specific. However, it should be noted that silence was not evident in all students. Ben said, “That’s not my personality”, Stephan said, “it won’t stop me from speaking”, and Sherlock claimed “I will express my opinion because this is discussion project”. Interestingly, Karen used social messaging to compensate for being quiet in face-to-face discussions. She explained, “I can spend more time organising my language”, hinting that spontaneous speech was demanding.

From the tutor’s perspective, silence and quietness occurred when 2+2s were struggling with the subject content. T1 described students as “very resistant” with an “unwillingness to admit there’s a problem”, he suggested that it was “almost certainly a cultural thing”. Although being asked about 2+2s specifically, T1 may have viewed all Chinese students as a homogeneous cultural group. According to T1, repeated failed attempts to engage Chinese students resulted in their exclusion, “If you’re talking to a group of four and one of them is a Chinese student, you basically just end up talking to the three and this presence who doesn’t contribute in a meaningful way”. T1s comments reflect Hennebry et al.’s (2012) findings where tutors felt educational cultural differences explained reticence whereas students cited linguistic deficiencies. T2’s experience was that 2+2s “were always at the quieter end of the scale”, but she did not generalise the group. T2 also found reticence was more noticeable in unfamiliar seminar discussions, supporting Schweisfurth & Gu’s (2009) observation that students were worried about speaking up in class discussions. However, none of the tutors avoided oral communication as teachers in Kim’s (2006) study did, perhaps because group work projects are part of course assessment and relate to the course outcomes of their programmes.

There were instances where participants appeared to contradict themselves or offer contradictory accounts of their experiences of oral communication. Brinkmann (2014) suggests such contradictions represent the *polyvocal* nature of phenomena (p. 288).

Examples of contradictions related to confidence and understanding can be seen in extracts from Ben and Sam's interviews:

Interviewer: Do you think it's the same speaking to native speakers and non-native speakers?

Ben: I think it's the same for me yeah.

(later) Interviewer: How do you feel communicating in English?

Ben: So difficulty is in speaking it and the second feeling is just make you nervous to speak a native speaker.

Interviewer: Why do you feel nervous speaking to them?

Ben: I think I'm afraid that I make a mistake in speaking English. Just to make other people difficult to understand what I mean.

Sam: I just tried to talk with them without caring nothing and I find it become there is no difficulty talking with them.

Interviewer: So there were no times when you found they didn't understand you?

Sam: When they don't understand me I just write my meaning down on the paper and they began to know what I want to say.

Such contradictions could be seen as evidence of the halo effect, or a reminder that probing an issue can reveal the multifaceted nature of experiences. Perhaps these are reflections of the *objective contradictions* of participants' worlds (Kvale, 2007, p. 12), or possibly participants remembering instances as the interview unfolds.

#### **4.2.4 Summary**

To review, both students and tutors discussed silence but there were different perceived reasons behind the silence. Tutors felt that silence was predominantly a result of culture and reluctance to integrate with their peers. 'Chinese' culture was blamed for poor communication skills in group work alongside a preference to work with their Chinese peers. On the other hand, 2+2s perceived accent and pace to be important affecting factors. Alongside local cultural references, strong accents and speed of speech had a negative impact on understanding. Moreover, when speaking in groups, 2+2s felt more comfortable in pairs or threes where they were more confident asking for repetition or clarification. Peers who were perceived to be encouraging led to increased confidence in oral

communication and NNEs students tended to be easier to communicate with as topics were less exclusionary. Regarding group work, it is possible that a lack of understanding of expectations was another factor in 2+2s difficulties in communication. A concern is that difficulty in oral communication leads to 2+2s inability to sufficiently meet their programme's communication outcomes.

### **4.3 How might international direct entry and oral communication affect accessing and joining a CoP?**

This section brings together the data discussed so far and analyses how it can be placed into the CoP and LPP frameworks. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Wenger (1998) states that an individual can be a member of several CoPs at one time. I believe there to be several CoPs that the 2+2s interact with, or potentially interact with; group work, discipline, international, UG, and 2+2. All of these CoPs will be referred to throughout but will be named to clarify which is being discussed.

#### **4.3.1 Joining an established group**

Focussing on a lack of formal introductions at the beginning of their sojourn, 2+2s could be at a disadvantage as they are less able to assert themselves as potential members of the discipline CoP (Duff, 2010). Potential access to this CoP through LPP did not necessarily occur until the first group work experience, which for Sherlock was as late as the second semester. Only T3's department introduced the 2+2s formally, explaining to the old-timers the potential future benefits of having a network from overseas. This helped to position the 2+2s as individuals who have something to offer the already established discipline CoP and possibly encouraged old-timers' to grant legitimacy (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

The challenge of joining an already established discipline CoP led to 2+2s relying on their intra-networks. This dependence on intra-networks is likely a means of avoiding the social isolation Christie et al. (2006) and Pike and Harrison (2011) mention is common in DE students. However, as Furnham (1997) and Zhou and Todman (2008) point out, this reliance can affect adjustment and further restrict integration with the possible result of 2+2s remaining on the periphery of the discipline CoP for longer. From an alternative perspective, another possible disadvantage to the reliance on other 2+2s is that it can make it difficult for

their non-2+2 peers to access the 2+2 intra-network CoP. Indeed, the tutors perceive the intra-network as exclusionary:

T1: They just stick together and then they're very exclusionary.

T2, 2+2 students I've had...have tended to work together if they can.

T3: They tend to clump together... if we could find a way of encouraging them to integrate more, that would be really to their benefit.

Tutor perceptions could be representative of Dunne's (2009) findings that a lack of integration was a result of home students, or non-2+2s, feeling that they could not enter the 2+2 intra-network. In other words, non-2+2s were on the periphery of the 2+2 CoP and felt like outsiders.

#### **4.3.2 Expert-novice interaction**

The divergent academic culture and lack of group-work experience mean 2+2s are reliant on old-timers to apprentice them into the practices of the CoP. To access the group work CoP, the more experienced continuers must be willing to accept the 2+2 newcomers, and the 2+2s must also prove themselves to be capable of learning and willing to adopt the group practices (Wenger, 1998). We can see such apprenticeship occurring when 2+2s followed instructions from group-leaders. For example, Karen explained, "She assigns me the work and I do it" and Max said, "The group talk was led by that student". However, there is the assumption that the old-timers in these interactions have been successfully socialised into the practices of the discipline CoP and that they are suitable models for the 2+2s to copy (Duff, 2007; 2010). Unfortunately, without observations it is not possible to evaluate the expert status of guides.

In group work, it is clear that 2+2s were using a variety of strategies to participate; asking questions, observing, and copying. Strategies employed by each participant can be seen in Table 7. However, we can see in Table 7 that not all students mentioned strategies for learning from old-timers and there were differences in the number of strategies employed by each participant. These participants said that they were not familiar with the discipline academic practices and that they did not have explicit instruction from more experienced

individuals. However, as tutors and 2+2s suggested that discipline practices became more familiar over time, it is possible that they employed strategies unconsciously or that 2+2s did not remember when asked during interviews.

Table 7

*The strategies novice 2+2s employed to learn from their more experienced peers*

Topic	Karen	Luke	Arthur	Sherlock	Aote	Max	Stephan	Ben	Sam
Observe peers	--	✓	--	--	✓	✓	--	--	--
Question peers	--	✓	--	--	✓	--	✓	✓	✓
Question teacher	--	--	✓	--	--	--	✓	--	✓
Identify 'model' student	--	--	--	--	--	✓	✓	✓	--
Copy peers' behaviour	--	--	--	--	✓	✓	--	--	--
Copy peers' language	✓	--	--	--	--	--	✓	--	✓

Note:

✓ indicates a participant referred to the relevant topic and -- depicts no mention.

Vickers (2007) describes group experts as information-givers who answer questions. Such engagement in LPP is illustrated in the following interview extracts:

Interviewer: So how did you learn what you were supposed to do?

Stephan: Basically, one major way is, like, we came here in third year. There had been people like starting from the first year. So, we asked them or chatting with them

regarding this. Otherwise we can chat with our senior students [2+2s from the previous annual intake].

Sam: I think the most important thing is that I need to ask questions when I'm in some trouble, I need to learn to ask questions about, ask a questions from the demonstrators and the tutors.

Findings in this study both support and contradict Zappa-Hollman (2007). Support comes from Sam's recognition that he needs to ask questions shows that he adjusted his practice to adhere to academic expectations such as interrupting and questioning. However, 2+2s assertions that they asked questions and sought peer assistance contradicts Zappa-Hollman's findings in which there was no evidence of pursuing peer assistance. It might be that peer assistance is dependent upon the interlocutors and relationships between peers. If the peer relationships are comfortable, peer-assistance may be more likely to be requested.

In light of this study, I would extend Vickers' (2007) earlier description of group experts to information-givers who also provide an opportunity for the more passive expert-novice interaction of observation. In larger communities such as tutorial and workshop CoPs, 2+2s observed the old-timers to better understand academic practices:

Aote: Sometimes I, for example, I find that they think a lot in the lectures and they ask a lot of questions, so I think maybe I'm expected to do that. And they usually have a lot of discussions with each other about the topics we have in the lecture and they usually read a lot, and so I think maybe I'm expected to do that.

Max: During the tutorial I just do the same thing.

Luke: I observe what they do and make assumptions.

Tutors also felt it was good practice to use more experienced peers as models. T1 and T2 stated that European students were particularly good models as they tended to be higher achievers with better presentation and group work skills compared with their British counterparts.

By copying their peers, 2+2s had the knowledge they needed to participate. However, we have seen that difficulties in following spoken dialogue prevented fuller access to the CoP. Lave and Wenger (1991) state that understanding is dependent upon transparency. Although Lave and Wenger are referring to technology, transparency can be applied to 2+2s language learning. As 2+2s' English proficiency increased, interactions and transactions became more transparent and understanding increased.

The challenges of oral communication may have affected 2+2s ability to join CoPs. Difficulties following fast paced speech, non-standard accents and the fast pace of discussions affected 2+2s abilities to engage in discourse. This struggle to engage could make LPP more difficult. To the outsider, it may even be perceived as an unwillingness to join the CoP. A further effect of lower proficiency might be that the continuing old-timers do not perceive 2+2s as valuable CoP members, in other words their lower English proficiency may be perceived as low intelligence (Leki, 2001).

#### **4.3.3 Positioning in expert-novice interactions**

The LPP experiences of the participants in group work were varied. Some students perceived their access to their group work CoPs as successful, possibly because their peers were willing to guide them. Sam was particularly positive about his contributions to his first group project, which were endorsed by his old-timer peers:

Sam: One of the things that left deep impression on me when we work together for the poster, I make the design. I design the poster background and also I provide the article that we needed to refer to to my partners and they find my ideas are good so they adopt my background design and also my articles.

This seems to contradict Leki's (2001) finding that NNEs were positioned as less valuable and thus marginalized. In this instance, Sam was positioned and confirmed as a valuable contributor able to show competence and legitimacy.

However, one 2+2 perceived himself marginalized in group work CoPs and remained on the periphery. Luke's experiences exemplify Duff's (2007) assertion that participation in a CoP is not benign but there may be evidence of fractious relationships:

Luke: It was quite challenging... some people are quite helpful and other are not helpful. They say why are you asking this? Keep doing your things and search online, we all do this. In fourth year, the group is not helpful at all.

Luke's experience shows that power relations within groups can affect whether assistance is offered (Morita, 2004; Morita & Kobayashi, 2008). It might be said that the core members in this CoP were more powerful than the newcomer, withholding assistance and promoting inequality.

Tutor comments suggest that 2+2s are potentially valuable members of discipline CoPs. Both T2 and T3 commented that the 2+2s often outperform other students due to their strengths in mathematics and factual knowledge. These are skills that could help position 2+2s more powerfully in their groups. Perhaps making such strengths more explicit to old-timers could have a positive effect on power differentials within groups.

Overall, old-timers were perceived to be willing guides and observing them helped socialise 2+2s into the CoP practices. Students with willing and encouraging group members gained acceptance and peripheral participation. However, because the groups were not observed in action it is not possible to ascertain whether tasks allocated to the 2+2 novices were low-stakes as Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest.

#### **4.3.4 Divergent cultures**

The divergent culture made some 2+2s feel like outsiders as they did not wish to participate in common practices of the UG CoP resulting in some finding alternative CoPs. Arthur did not wish to join his discipline CoP in drinking and talking about relationships, as a result he joined a Christian CoP and later converted his religion. It is unclear why Luke was rejected, but it is clear that he felt himself positioned as an outsider. He eventually associated more with the international CoP and older students.

In contrast, some students welcomed the new culture and practices and through being proactive and engaging in alcohol consumption and socialising outside class they increased their social circle and integrated into their discipline and international communities:



Stephan: If you don't arrange to, or you don't actively trying to get out, like, I tell to my friends 'Are you going out? Are you going to gym this afternoon?' it's never going to happen.

Sam: Before I come, I don't think drinking alcohol is good... Drinking alcohol is one thing they teach me. We play badminton together... I do not feel lonely, I find friendship here.

Max: The second semester of last year [third year]...I start to go out for dinner with my course mates, some of my course mates from Europe.

Dunne (2009) explained that not understanding slang and humour can lead to reduced cultural integration. Karen was more preoccupied with the importance of humour in British culture. She stated on more than one occasion the importance of jokes as a way to appear fun. Karen felt she was not a legitimate member amongst her peers when she found it difficult to follow jokes and took active steps in trying to overcome this divide by watching popular television programmes and increasing her vocabulary that was a marker for that CoP. The following extract shows how the social aspect of studying abroad was perceived to be important for integrating into her discipline CoP:

Karen: When I talk with people with my classmates or friends I can use some dirty jokes and even some dirty words and they don't think it's impolite and they even think it's funny and it's important to become humorous person because if I become humorous I can make friends with more people I can increase my social.

Lave and Wenger (1991) discuss the construction of identity and how involvement in and learning from the social community shapes identity. Karen's development of her understanding of humour and subsequent integration into her target community supports this. Arthur's conversion to Christianity as a result of joining the International Christian Society CoP offers further support. Finally, Elliot et al. (2016) stated friendship assists acculturation therefore actively pursuing engagement with the target CoP, as these 2+2s did, is essential.

#### **4.3.5 Summary**

To summarise, perceptions of joining CoPs were different depending upon the CoP that was being approached. 2+2s were able to access group work CoPs through LPP when the groups consisted of peers who were perceived as welcoming and helpful, or willing to apprentice them. There is a possibility that lack of content knowledge and lower English proficiency made joining the group and discipline CoPs challenging as 2+2s found it difficult to position themselves as knowledgeable community members. In the discipline CoP, 2+2s perceived access was easier when communicating with small groups. However, on courses where there were a large number of 2+2s enrolled, such as Sherlock's, access to the discipline CoP was perceived as more difficult. In their discipline CoPs, a lack of introductions at the start of the course may have encouraged the positioning of 2+2s as outsiders, resulting in an increased tendency to rely on their intra-network 2+2 CoP. The international CoP was perceived to be more welcoming and easier to access as issues with language proficiency were less obvious and 2+2s did not find themselves deficient in cultural knowledge.

#### **4.4 Implications and recommendations**

This study has raised implications for both theory and practice. Regarding theory, this research suggests that CoP and LPP frameworks can be usefully applied to describe transition experiences of international DE students. The vague definition of a CoP means the CoP framework can be used to refer to an individual's multi-membership of a variety of groupings from small group projects to the wider international student community. Furthermore, the LPP framework appears to provide a suitable means to describe how individuals learn the practices of and integrate into their CoPs to varying degrees.

However, neither Lave and Wenger's (1991) LPP framework nor Wenger's (1998) CoP framework sufficiently recognise conflict or peripherality. Agreeing with Leki (2001) and Morita (2004), student accounts suggest that access to CoPs is variable and dependent upon a variety of factors such as power differentials, language proficiency, and confidence. Implication for theory is that CoP and LPP literature should more explicitly recognise how language ability and power may affect CoP integration.

Turning to practice, a number of implications in light of the data in this study are related to best practice; pre-course preparations, formalised introductions, and being explicit about expectations. These issues will be discussed in chronological order, starting from suggestions for action pre-course to recommendations during the course.

Concerns were raised regarding spoken proficiency and content knowledge gaps. Regarding proficiency, one option is for departments to raise English language entry requirements to at least match first year entry requirements. However, it is acknowledged that this would negatively affect the number of 2+2s eligible to join the programme. Another possibility is for increased listening and speaking practice to take place on the pre-sessional course, with a greater focus on non-standard accents and authentic materials. Turning to content knowledge, as the SFC (2005) recommend, improved mapping of courses in China and the UK could be beneficial. If this is not possible, content-based classes for each department run concurrently with the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) pre-sessional classes may help reduce the content knowledge-gap.

The current pre-sessional aims to aid the academic transition from China to the UK. In order to prepare the 2+2s as fully as possible prior to their discipline study, closer relations and communication between EAP tutors and discipline tutors is necessary. To fully understand the needs of 2+2s, observations of oral communication during their discipline studies would be most beneficial. Observations would allow EAP tutors to establish core skills across departments and perhaps ascertain common areas for improvement. Furthermore, knowledge gained from observations could be used to further develop pre-sessional course materials to reflect communication on 2+2s degree programmes.

At the beginning of the penultimate academic year, best practice should be to formally introduce 2+2s to their discipline CoP. This might encourage integration between old-timer continuers and 2+2 newcomers. Furthermore, tutors should be informed which students are 2+2s prior to their courses so 2+2s can be monitored for weaknesses and extra support and guidance in the practices of the CoP can be organised if resources allow.

During the course, especially in the early days of third year, tutors should be more explicit concerning their expectations (Duff, 2010). We have seen that tutors may incorrectly assume 2+2s have the necessary awareness of group work skills and experience of tutorials and workshops. Moreover, referring 2+2s to a department guidebook is unlikely to be sufficient, especially if we accept that situated learning requires practice doing (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Guidance on group work as well as tutorial and workshop practices should be given as these are aspects of UG study that 2+2s are less familiar with.

2+2s in this study seemed to have been socialised into the new academic culture through guidance from continuing students. In group work, 2+2s should be placed with more experienced continuers so old-timers can act as guides and help 2+2 novices move from periphery to core (Leki, 2001; Vickers, 2007). This has important implications regarding the ratio of newcomers and old-timers on a course. For LPP to occur, there should be sufficient old-timers to guide 2+2s into the practices of the CoP. In courses with high numbers of newcomers, there may be fewer opportunities to be apprenticed.

Another implication is the discrepancy between student and teacher perceptions in terms of oral communication difficulties. The varying perceptions and experiences of 2+2s in this study highlight that teachers should be encouraged not to view all Chinese students or 2+2s as a homogenous group. As Wenger (1998) explains, “homogeneity is neither a requirement for, nor the result of, the development of a community of practice” (p. 76). That is, each member of a CoP should be recognised as having his or her own unique identity. Secondly, it may be beneficial for discipline tutors to be informed of the student perspectives of oral communication. Informing tutors of 2+2s perceptions of challenges they face with pace, accent, and divergent academic cultures could increase understanding between tutors and students (Cross & Hitchcock, 2007). Hopefully, such awareness-raising would limit the perception that 2+2s are unwilling to interact and integrate, instead informing tutors that silence or reticence could be a result of adjustment to a non-standard accent or a new academic practice. It may also be pertinent to encourage tutors to slow the pace of their speech and adapt their language in the early days of the modules with 2+2s enrolled.

Finally, increased communication between departments hosting 2+2s could encourage best practice to be expanded across all departments. Although I have mainly focussed on areas that could be improved, it is important to recognise there are instances of good practice taking place according to the data I have. One example of this is T3’s students being positioned as future career networking contacts. Another is 2+2s being assigned the same personal tutor. Such group meetings could provide a platform for discussing expectations in oral communication and recommendations to observe and learn from the continuing students. These seem viable practices that could be adopted across departments.

#### **4.5 Limitations**

My choice of topic, development of questions, and analysis and interpretation of data is unavoidably influenced by my interests, professional background, and preconceptions (Cohen et al., 2011; Kvale, 2007; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). However, I have endeavoured to maintain quality by increasing transparency and noting limitations. The possible limitations of the research approach and use of SSIs as an instrument were addressed in the methodology section. This section acknowledges further limitations of my study regarding participant selection, representativeness, relationship with the researcher, and validity of accounts.

The timing of data collection affected the recruitment of participants. Unfortunately, by the time the interview guide had been prepared at the end of the academic year, the exam diet was well underway. Many students had already returned to China, and others were completing their end of year exams. Tutors were involved in exam marking and exam board meetings. This likely affected the sample size and the representativeness of the chosen population. Regarding participant recruitment, while practical, the convenience and purposive sampling affects the generalizability of results. While the volunteer participants are a subset of a specific population, it is likely that they are not representative of all participants involved with the 2+2 programme.

Another issue is the departmental representativeness of the participants. This study aimed to better understand the international DE transition experiences of 2+2 students and teachers in my institution. However, not all Schools involved in the 2+2 programme are represented in this study. Tutors in this study only represent three out of six departments. The School of Engineering have the largest intake of 2+2s but no tutors from this School volunteered to take part. Moreover, students represent only four departments and it is unfortunate that there were not more third year students available to take part to provide balance. Despite these limitations, a number of departments involved in the programme did take part but it is acknowledged that the sample is limited. In order to verify the validity of my results, a larger number of students and tutors from a wider range of departments should be consulted. This might improve the generalizability of the results of this study and allow me to compare perceptions within and across departments more accurately.

The students and tutors knew me as the director of the 2+2 pre-session course but we were not well acquainted. As I have no involvement in their discipline studies, I feel that I

was removed enough from participants' experiences to avoid my preconceptions and bias affecting data collection. However, interactions with me as a course co-ordinator may have introduced power asymmetry into interactions with students. Students may have over or under reported depending upon what they thought I expected of them (Dörnyei, 2007).

Finally, this study relies on retrospective accounts and limited course data, affecting the validity of findings. Students were being asked to reflect upon experiences from the preceding year or two years so experiences may have been distorted with time. Although there were times when some participants contradicted themselves during interviews, they appeared to present honest and open accounts of their experiences. However, if students were followed through their two years of study, accounts may be both more retrievable and accurate. Over time, there is a risk that experiences are misremembered or altered and the reliability of data affected. Furthermore, this study would have greatly benefitted from observations of the students engaging in group work, seminars and workshops. As we saw in Cao and Philp (2006), self-reports do not always match observable phenomenon so observations would allow me to triangulate data and analyse whether student perceptions match reality.

## **5. Conclusion**

The focus of this small-scale exploratory study has been to investigate student and tutor perceptions of international DE transition, with a focus on transition into third year and challenges in oral communication. The theoretical frameworks used were Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (1998) CoP and LPP situated learning theories, which proved to be effective frameworks for this investigation.

A review of the literature in Chapter 2 showed that there was a need to further investigate international DE transition. It was evident that students who study the first part of their UG degree in their home country and complete it in another are under-represented in the literature. I drew on findings from studies in the fields of international transition, DE, and oral communication that were relevant to the international DE experience. As subjects in my research were entering into a new discourse community in a new academic culture, I used an LPP framework to describe how 2+2 students learned to participate in their new CoPs.

Qualitative data was collected through SSIs with international DE students and tutors from my University. Nine students and three tutors took part in SSIs, which were audio recorded and transcribed. Student and tutor responses allowed me to compare the perceptions of both groups to identify converging and diverging views. Additional data of course outcomes was used to complement the interviews.

Regarding international DE transition, it was found that 2+2s struggled to join an already established group. It was suggested that the lack of formal introductions exacerbated the feeling of otherness. 2+2s relied on intra-networks, especially in the early stages of their sojourn, perhaps slowing the process of integration into the new third year discipline community. Furthermore, 2+2s had to transition to a new academic and social culture. New practices such as group work, tutorials and workshops had to be navigated, possibly without explicit instruction from academic tutors. Both students and tutors felt that joining the courses in third year did leave 2+2s disadvantaged. Students had missed out on the academic socialisation that took place predominantly in the first year and then consolidated in the second year of study. Turning to the social culture, differing social practices left some 2+2s feeling isolated from their peers and led to difficulties adjusting to the host country's social values.

Focussing on perceived challenges in oral communication, making oneself understood and understanding others was particularly difficult for 2+2s. Students' limited experience of oral communication in English meant they found it difficult to express themselves clearly. Fast-paced discussions and speed of speech led to difficulties interacting with groups. A further challenge was understanding non-standard accents that 2+2s were unused to. These challenges resulted in a preference for one-to-one interactions, and led to some students

reverting to silence. A further outcome was 2+2s developing closer relationships with international students who were perceived to be easier to understand. Tutors noted the silence of 2+2s and their inability to fully engage in discussions, but believed culture was the reason for reticence.

International DE and challenges of oral communication affected 2+2s ability to join various CoPs. The lack of introductions at the start of third year possibly led to 2+2s being positioned as less valuable members of the CoP. Weaker oral skills and new academic practices meant 2+2s initially remained on the periphery of the CoPs and affected participation. However, expert-novice interaction in which 2+2s questioned, observed and copied their more experienced peers led to LPP and adjustment to new academic practices. 2+2s accessed different CoPs to varying degrees and each student's experiences were different. Overall, 2+2s seemed to find accessing the international student CoP easier.

Several recommendations were made regarding international DE transition; higher entry requirements, a more thorough pre-course induction, the need for tutors to be explicit regarding expectations, and better communication and understanding between students and tutors. Furthermore, it was apparent that practices across CSE departments were not consistent. Increased communications between departments, including EAP instructors, and sharing of best practice could further improve the 2+2 experience for both students and tutors.

Limitations to this study must be acknowledged, namely its scale, the lack of observations to support participants' accounts and non-representation from some departments. Despite these limitations, this research has added to the scant literature on international DE transition. By giving students and tutors a voice, it has shown that perceptions and experiences are not homogeneous even in a seemingly homogeneous group. However, further investigations are needed to confirm whether results from this study can be generalised beyond the two 2+2 year groups that were interviewed.

Further research is recommended to enhance this small-scale study that relied on retrospective data. It would be beneficial to extend this research by following a group of 2+2s from the beginning of their pre-session course throughout the two years of their study. A longitudinal approach, including increased triangulation of data through student



observations, could offer further insights into the increasingly common international DE experience.

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**Appendix A**  
**2+2 programme guide (omitted for anonymity)**

**APPENDIX B**  
**Participant information sheets and consent forms**

**Participant information sheet**



I am an MA TESOL student in the Department of Linguistics and English Language at (omitted for anonymity) and as part of my final research project I would like to invite you to take part in a research study about spoken communication on Undergraduate Science courses.

Please take time to read the following information carefully before you decide whether or not you wish to take part.

**What is the study about?**

This study aims to explore the types of spoken communication that take place on your course (e.g. in small-groups in tutorials, in the lab) and what factors 2+2 students perceive may affect their ability to communicate in these learning situations.

**Why have I been invited?**

I have approached you because I am interested in understanding more about how 2+2 students feel about communicating with their peers and tutors after joining the third year of their degree programme.

I would be very grateful if you would agree to take part in this study.

**What will I be asked to do if I take part?**

If you decided to take part, this would involve the following:

- You will take part in a 30-45 minute audio-recorded interview.
- You may be emailed post-interview if any further information related to the interview is required. The emails will be short and can be answered in note form.

**What are the possible benefits from taking part?**

Taking part in this study will allow you to share your experiences of spoken communication on your Undergraduate 2+2 course and your insights will specifically contribute to developing our summer pre-sessional course so that we can assist future 2+2 students in their transition to (omitted for anonymity).

**Do I have to take part?**

No. It's completely up to you to decide whether or not you take part. Your participation is voluntary. If you do choose to take part in this study, this will not affect your studies or future assessments at (omitted for anonymity). Furthermore, it will not affect your future classes or relations with any tutors at (omitted for anonymity).

**What if I change my mind?**

If you change your mind, you are free to withdraw at any time during your participation in this study. If you want to withdraw, please let me know, and I will extract any ideas or information you contributed (i.e. interview data or email correspondence) to the study and destroy them. However, it is difficult and often impossible to take out data from one specific participant when this has already been anonymised or pooled together with other people's data. Therefore, you can only withdraw up to 3 weeks after taking part in the study.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

It is unlikely that there will be any major disadvantages to taking part. The main consideration is that you will need to timetable 30-45 minutes for an interview at a mutually convenient location (for example at your University campus).

**Will my data be identifiable?**

After the interview, I, the researcher conducting this study will have access to the ideas you share with me and so will my supervisor at (omitted for anonymity).

I will keep all personal information about you (e.g. your name and other information about you that can identify you) confidential, that is I will not share it with others. To help ensure anonymity, a pseudonym will be used. I will remove any personal information from the written record of your contribution.

**How will we use the information you have shared with us and what will happen to the results of the research study?**

I, the researcher, will use the information you have shared with me only in the following ways:  
I will use it for research purposes only. This will include:

- my MA dissertation
- other publications such as journal articles
- I may also present the results of my study at academic conferences
- I may also present the results of my study within (omitted for anonymity) for the purpose of improving our pre-sessional EAP courses.

When writing up the findings from this study, I would like to reproduce some of the views and ideas you shared with me. I will only use anonymised quotes (e.g. from my interview with you), so that although I will use your exact words, you cannot be identified in our publications.

**How my data will be stored**

Your data will be stored in encrypted files (that is no-one other than me, the researcher will be able to access them) and on password-protected computers. I will store hard copies of any data securely in locked cabinets in my office. I will keep data that can identify you separately from non-personal information (e.g. your views on a specific topic). In accordance with University guidelines, I will keep the data securely for a minimum of ten years.

**What if I have a question or concern?**

If you have any queries or if you are unhappy with anything that happens concerning your participation in the study, please contact myself via email: (omitted for anonymity)

If you have any concerns or complaints that you wish to discuss with a person who is not directly involved in the research, you can also contact:  
(omitted for anonymity)

**Sources of support**

If you require further support regarding spoken communication as a result of this study, you can contact the following sources of support:

(omitted for anonymity)

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and (omitted for anonymity) Management School's Research Ethics Committee.

**Thank you for considering your participation in this project.**

**CONSENT FORM**

**Project Title: Exploring perceptions of 2+2 students regarding transition and spoken interaction on their Undergraduate Science degree**

Name of Researcher:  
Email: (Omitted)

**Please tick each box**

1. I, the participant, confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during my participation in this study and within 3 weeks after I took part in the study, without giving any reason. If I withdraw within <b>3 weeks</b> of taking part in the study my data will be removed.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher/s, but my personal information will not be included and I will not be identifiable.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I understand that my name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentation without my consent.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I understand that any interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I understand that data will be kept according to University guidelines for a minimum of 10 years after the end of the study.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I agree to take part in the above study.	<input type="checkbox"/>

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.**

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent \_\_\_\_\_ Date  
\_\_\_\_\_ Day/month/year

**One copy of this form will be given to the participant and the original kept in the files of the researcher at (omitted for anonymity)**

**Research consent and information sheet**

I am a teaching fellow in (omitted for anonymity) and an MA TESOL distance student in the Department of Linguistics and English Language at (omitted for anonymity). Further to this, I co-ordinate (omitted for anonymity)

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study about spoken communication on Undergraduate Science Courses. I would be grateful if you would read the following information.

### **What is the study about?**

This study aims to explore the types of spoken communication that takes place on the Undergraduate 2+2 students' course (e.g. in small-groups, tutorials, in the lab) and what factors 2+2 students perceive may affect their ability to communicate in these learning situations.

### **What will I be asked to do if I take part?**

If you decided to take part, this would involve the following:

- You will take part in a 30 minute audio-recorded interview.
- You may be emailed post-interview if any further information related to the interview is required. The emails will be short and can be answered in note form.

### **What are the possible benefits from taking part?**

The insights and perspectives from 2+2 students will contribute to (omitted for anonymity) course so that we can better assist 2+2 students in their transition to 3<sup>rd</sup> year study within your department. After the data has been interpreted, it may be possible to identify areas in which 2+2 students feel sufficiently supported, as well as areas in which we may be able to offer further language support in the future. It is also hoped that this research will help strengthen the relationship between (omitted for anonymity). Comparing the perspectives of tutors on your programme with those of 2+2 students will provide an insight into the extent to which tutor and student perceptions match.

### **Confidentiality and anonymity**

Only I, the researcher, conducting the study will have access to the ideas shared in interviews as well as my supervisor (omitted for anonymity)

All personal information of participants (e.g. names and other information that can identify participants) will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity. The (institution) will not be explicitly named in any resulting articles or texts.

### **How will the information be used?**

I will use the information from interviews for research purposes only. This will include:

- my MA dissertation
- other publications such as journal articles
- I may also present the results of my study at academic conferences
- I may also present the results of my study within my department

When writing up the findings from this study, I would like to reproduce some of the views and ideas shared with me. I will only use anonymised quotes so that although I will use exact words, participants cannot be identified in our publications. Furthermore, (omitted for anonymity) will not be named specifically within any publication.

### **Data storage**

Data will be stored in a password-protected file on a password-protected computer. Hard copies will be kept in a locked cabinet in my office. In accordance with University guidelines, data will be securely stored for a minimum of ten years.

**Questions or concerns?**

If you have any queries or if you are unhappy with anything that happens concerning your participation in the study, please contact myself via email: (omitted for anonymity).

If you have any concerns or complaints that you wish to discuss with a person who is not directly involved in the research, you can also contact:  
(omitted for anonymity)

**Who has reviewed the project?**

The study will be reviewed by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at (omitted for anonymity) Management School's Research Ethics Committee. It has also been discussed with my supervisor, (omitted for anonymity)

**Thank you for considering your participation in this project.**

Please find below, a consent form which confirms your agreement of the research taking place. Please contact me at any time should you require any further information.

**CONSENT FORM**

**Project Title: Exploring perceptions of 2+2 students regarding transition and spoken interaction on their Undergraduate degree courses**

Name of Researcher:

Email: (omitted)

**Please tick each box**

8. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I understand that the department's participation is voluntary and that it can withdraw at any time during this study.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I understand that any information collected during the study may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher/s, but personal information will not be included and the department will not be identifiable.	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I understand that the name of the department will not appear in any reports, articles or presentation without consent.	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I understand that any data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure.	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I understand that data will be kept according to University guidelines for a minimum of 10 years after the end of the study.	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I agree to take part in the above study.	<input type="checkbox"/>

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of department representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**I confirm that the department was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the department have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the department has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.**

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Day/month/year

**One copy of this form will be given to the participant and the original kept in the files of the researcher at (omitted for anonymity)**

## **Appendix C Interview Guides**

### **Interview Guide students**

Thank you for agreeing to this interview. I am interested in finding out more about your perceptions of entering the university in the third year and perceptions of spoken

interaction on your UG course. I would like to audio-record this interview and also remind you that everything you say will remain confidential- all data will be stored in a secure location and you will not be identifiable. A pseudonym will be used to further ensure confidentiality. If you're happy to continue, the interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes.

*Outline:*

I will start by asking about your degree course and your experiences in China. Then I will move on to questions about your experience here in (omitted for anonymity): the interactions that take place on your course in the UK and how you feel about them. At the end, you will have the chance to ask me any questions.

1. UG degree course
2. IELTS speaking score when you entered the university

*Focussing on experience in **China**:*

3. Interactions in China  
(e.g. lab/ seminars/ tutorials/ workshops/ group work)  
In English or Chinese?

*Focus on experience in (omitted for anonymity):*

*'Factual'*

4. Interactions
5. Groupings
6. Who you interact with (NES/ NNES, 2+2s/ yr 1 continuers)

*'Perceptions'*

7. Experience of using English on course as a non L1 English speaker
8. Ease of participation/ challenges interacting (examples)
9. Strategies to overcome challenges of communicating in English (examples)
10. Change in confidence regarding interacting in English (over time)
11. Perceptions of joining in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year

*'Socialization'*

12. Difference between Chinese University and this university
13. Understanding of classroom culture and norms to participate
14. Expert/novice interactions  
(e.g. learn by asking questions/ copying/ just did it)

*Thank you very much for participating in this research. Do you have any final comments or questions?*

**Interview Guide teachers**

Thank you for agreeing to this interview. I am interested in finding out more about your perceptions of 2+2s entering the university in the third year and perceptions of their spoken interaction on your UG course. I would like to audio-record this interview and also remind you that everything you say will remain confidential- all data will be stored in a secure location and you will not be identifiable. A pseudonym will be used to further ensure

confidentiality. If you're happy to continue, the interview will take approximately 30 minutes.

*Outline:*

I will start by asking about what you teach, the types of interactive tasks that take place, and your expectations of students. I will then ask about your experiences of teaching 2+2s. At the end, you will have the chance to ask me any questions.

1. Course responsible for
2. Number of 2+2s on the programme
3. Interactions that take place on the course (e.g. fieldwork, group projects)
4. Explaining expectations to 2+2s e.g. when set up a task
5. Feedback students get
6. How successful 2+2s are in 3<sup>rd</sup> year interactions/ 4<sup>th</sup> year interactions
7. 2+2s weaknesses
8. Integration of 2+2s and continuers
9. How 2+2s are socialised into the group
10. Refer to learning outcomes: extent 2+2s achieve them
11. Perceptions of study in China versus UK

*Thank you very much for participating in this research. Do you have any final comments or questions?*

**Appendix D**  
**Samples of coded data: Student and tutor transcripts**

**Coded transcript: Aote (student)**

I: What I'm going to do is I'm going to start off by asking just a couple of factual pieces of information, and then we're going to talk very briefly about your	
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experience of your first two years of your degree in China, and then we're going to focus on your experience in (omitted for anonymity) after that. So first of all, can you tell me what your degree course is?	
A: (omitted for anonymity).	
I: OK. And can you remember what your IELTS speaking score was when you-? Can you remember what your IELTS speaking score was when you came over to (omitted for anonymity)?	
A: It's university in China, or-	
I: From, did you do an IELTS test?	
A: IELTS, oh, yeah.	
I: Can you remember what your speaking score was?	
A: Score. Six.	
I: Six for the speaking. Ok, thank you. Have you taken another one since then? That's your most recent one?	
A: Yeah. That's the most recent one.	
I: OK, great. Ok, so, first of all, in China, on your course, can you tell me what interactions took place as part of your learning? So, did you have like lab work, seminars, tutorials, workshops, group work?	
A: We have lab work and some group works. But <b>{3<sup>rd</sup> year new} no tutorials, no workshops, no seminars.</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> year new
I: In the lab, were you working with a partner, or were you working by yourself?	
A: It depends. I had some lab courses, I usually work alone. But I joined some research with my, following my tutors, I do the lab, lab work with my teammates.	
I: Ok, very good, did you enjoy that?	
A: Yeah.	
I: Excellent. And the group work, how many people were in the group? So were they, were they just like two people, or were they bigger groups of three, four, or five people?	
A: Usually big groups, like four or five people.	
I: And were there any other kind of interactions, spoken interactions that took place on your course? So in lectures, did you have lectures?	
A: Yeah.	
I: Yeah. And in the lectures, were they interactive, did you ask questions during the lecture, or at the end of the lecture?	
A: Nearly no students will ask questions in the lectures. But some students will ask questions after the lecture, and we have some, we usually do some presentation.	
I: Ok, and with the presentation, at the end do you have like questions and answers?	
A: Yeah.	
I: Yeah, OK. So [inc]. And was it all in Chinese, or did you do any of this in English?	
A: Nearly all university in China has, has a English course. Yeah, we learn English in uni, but all my, except for the English course, all, all of our courses are in Chinese.	
I: OK, OK. And the English course at university, was that, was that like for IELTS for exams, or was it for like general English or academic English?	
A: Ge-, general.	
I: General English, OK.	

A: And we also have academic English too. But it's usually in the fourth or third year.	
I: OK, so that's like after you've already left that those ones take place. OK. OK. All right, thank you. So now I've got a better idea of, of what your course was like in China. In (omitted for anonymity), what kind of interactions take place? So, do you still have labs?	
A: Yeah.	
I: Mhm. And what else do you have?	
A: <b>{3rd year new} Field work. We do a lot of group work in field work.</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> year new
I: OK. Yeah. And do you have, like, seminars, tutorials, workshops?	
A: Yeah.	
I: OK. All of them?	
A: <b>{3<sup>rd</sup> year new} Tutorial and workshop.</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> year new
I: And in the tutorials, are they working in groups, are they working in pairs, or are you speaking just to the tutor, what are the interactions that take place?	
A: Just to speak to tutor.	
I: OK. And in the lab, is that just speaking to a demonstrator or a tutor, or are you speaking to your course mates as well?	
A: Yeah. Speak to course mates as well. It's about, <b>{group work} it's a five people group.</b>	Group work
I: OK. OK. So five people in that group. And then you also have field work as well, so you go out?	
A: Yes.	
I: OK. And are those in, are they in big groups again as well, or, how many people are in a group?	
A: My last field trip is to (omitted for anonymity), so worked as a group of seven, seven or eight people.	
I: OK. Did you say to (omitted for anonymity)?	
A: Yeah.	
I: That's the best field trip I've ever heard of. OK. So a bit different from your very first one, where I think you went to (omitted for anonymity, didn't you, when you first came to the UK you went right up to the north of (omitted for anonymity), so a very different field trip there. OK. So it sounds like you have a lot of different interactions on your course now. So working, do you work in pairs a lot with just one other person. Do you work in pairs with just one other person?	
A: No.	
I: No. <b>{group work} So you don't have pair work but you work in sort of smaller groups.</b>	Group work
A: Yeah.	
I: And do you ever have to speak to people as a whole class?	
A: Yes. Some presentations.	
I: OK. So you do have quite a mixture of sort of group interactions, it seems. Now, when you're working in these groups, are they, what's the nationality mix, are they mainly other Two Plus Two students, or are they continuing students that have been here from first year.	
A: <b>{integration} All of them are continuing students, and no Chinese students in my class.</b>	Integration
I: And, sorry, what was that? No Chinese?	
A: Yeah. I'm the only one.	

I: You're the only Chinese student, OK. So, OK, so, are you the only student that arrived in the third year?	
A: Yeah.	
I: OK. Right. So we're going to come back to that in a minute, so I'm going to ask you a bit more about when you, you entered the group shortly. But what has, what's your experience of communicating in English in these situations been? So English isn't your first language. OK, so Chinese is your first language.	
A: Yeah.	
I: How have you found communicating and speaking in English in the lab and in group work and in field work?	
A: It's, <b>{international communication -} it's so difficult</b> . In field work, we need to design the experiment by ourself, and we do it, but the problem is that when English speaking, <b>{NS communication - not understand} English native speaking speakers talk, I can't follow them</b> . So I don't know what they are talking about, so I, <b>{outsider} I can't join the discussion</b> , and so, yeah.	International communication - NES communication - Not understand  Outsider
I: And when you say you can't follow them, why, what's stopping you from following them?	
A: It's <b>{NS speed -} too fast</b> . And some <b>{vocab -} vocabularies</b> , I think.	NS speed - Vocabulary -
I: OK, and are they, are all the students that you're working with, are they native speakers, or are they some of them other international students from Europe or Asia?	
A: Some are from Europe, but most of them are British students.	
I: OK. So the main problem is that it's quite fast when they're talking to each other. So what do you do in that situation? So when they're speaking very fast and you're finding it difficult to join in and to follow what they're saying, what do you do?	
A: Because they are talking, <b>{interaction -} I can't stop them and ask a lot of questions</b> , so I listen and try my best to understand. And I can, I can usually get pieces of information. <b>{not understand} I can't understand all of them, but some of them</b> . And then I did an experiment with them, and if, so, <b>{question peers} I asked them some questions</b> if I can understand, so I get more information, and then there, they take notes for the discussion, so I borrow the notes from my classmate.	Interaction - Not understand Question peers
I: Okay. So you borrow the notes that they made whilst you were talking?	
A: Yeah.	
I: OK. And is that helpful?	
A: Yeah, it's really helpful. Because they record all of their, all of their main points they are talking about.	
I: OK. <b>{peers willing} And they're happy to help you doing that, so they're happy to give you their notes, OK, that's good. So you said that you, you don't want to stop them?</b>	Peers willing
A: Yeah.	
I: Why don't you want to stop them?	
A: Because it's not, <b>{not understand} I can't understand, I can't understand most of them, they are talking about. So it's not that I can't understand one vocabulary or one sentence</b> , it's, yeah, <b>{burden} but if I stop them, they will progress much slower, so-</b>	Not understand Burden

I: OK, so you feel like you don't want to be responsible for making the work take longer?	
A: Yeah, yeah.	
I: So at this time you stay silent, just listen?	
A: Yeah, but sometimes, if I understand a little bit, and I have some questions, I will ask. <b>{silence} But yeah, just a few times I keep silent most of the time.</b>	Silence
I: OK. OK. And the topics that you're talking about with them, and the experiments that you're doing, do you have knowledge of that from your subject? So do you understand the topic, or is it a completely new topic?	
A: It's, it's a new topic. <b>{content} And another problem is that the courses they learn in the first, first and second year, some courses of, some courses I didn't learn in China, so yeah, and in this field trip, is mainly about the ocean. But I haven't learned it at all. So yeah.</b>	Content -
I: OK. So how was that experience, when, doing the course about the ocean, how did you find that experience, was it difficult to work on it?	
A: Yeah, it's difficult. But it's, it started difficult, but if you follow them, it will, yeah, find it much more easier.	
I: OK. So as time went on, it became much easier. OK. So it seems that, it seems that what you're saying is that the challenges that you've had are partly related to the speed of people speaking, occasionally the vocabulary, and also some of the content knowledge as well. So you're missing some of that subject information as well. OK. Which one of those do you think is the most challenging? <b>Which one do you think creates the most difficulty?</b>	
A: <b>{speaking -} Speaking</b>	Speaking -
I: With speaking. Do you think it's the speed, the vocabulary, or the content?	
A: The <b>{speed -} speed.</b>	Speed – (NES/ NNES?)
I: The speed's the most difficult. OK.	
A: And <b>{accent -} accent.</b>	Accent -
I: The accent as well. Ok. Is there a particular accent that's very difficult?	
A: Scottish!	
I: Do you think that you're getting used to the Scottish accent now, or not? Is it getting easier to understand it?	
A: Yeah, it's easier, but, it's still difficult.	
I: Are there a lot of Scottish students on your course?	
A: Three.	
I: Three. OK. And the others are from England or-?	
A: England, France, German, yeah.	
I: And the English students, are their accents easier-	
A: Yeah.	
I: -to follow? OK. So you've got a couple of other students that are from Europe, yeah?	
A: Yeah.	
I: And do you find that it's easier to speak with the students from Europe, or do you find it the same as speaking to the students from the UK?	
A: It's-. I think because all of my classmates started their study here, things first year. So I think the Europe students, <b>{perceive less proficient} they speak English very well.</b> It's, yeah. I can't, yeah. I can't tell the difference between Europe students and UK students. But I have some European students-. European flatmates. They just came here for one semester, or just for one year.	Perceive less proficient International

So <b>{international communication +}</b> it's much easier to speak with them.	communication +
I: OK, so the students, the sort of newer international students are easier?	
A: Yeah.	
I: Why is it easier?	
A: I <b>{vocab}</b> can understand all of the vocabularies, and <b>{speed +}</b> they speak much slower.	Vocabulary Speed +
I: OK. So again it's the speed that's the real problem, OK.	
A: Another problem is that, when native speaks-, <b>{topic NS-} native students speak, they talk about something I don't know.</b> Yeah, for example, yeah, I had a party with them last night, and they talked about <b>{alcohol} alcohol</b> or some music, or some politics, but I'm not familiar with them. So it's difficult to follow, yeah. But <b>{topic +} when I talk with newer international students, I'm familiar with the topics.</b>	Topic NES negative Alcohol Topic international +
I: So the topics you discuss are possibly more global topics that-	
A: Yeah.	
I: -people from different countries can interact with. So for example at this party, when they're talking about music and these things that you don't understand, again, how do you react, do you sit silently or do you ask about them, do you try and learn about what they're talking about.	
A: Yeah, sometimes. <b>{group size} If it's one people, only one people is talking to me, I will ask.</b> But if it is <b>{group size} {silence} a group talk, then I ask sometimes, but I usually keep silent.</b>	Group size Silence
I: OK. And <b>{group size} generally do you find it easier speaking to a smaller group of people, just one or two people compared to the bigger groups?</b>	Group size
A: Yeah, yeah.	
I: Why do you find it easier?	
A: Yeah, <b>{group size} if I speak to a smaller group, if I can't understand I will ask. And, yeah. But it a big group I don't.</b>	Group size
I: OK. I understand. I understand. Do you think that your confidence in speaking has changed since you started your course? So do you think that you are more confident speaking in English now, do you feel your confidence is the same, or do you feel less confident speaking in English?	
A: The same.	
I: It feels the same?	
A: Yeah. Same.	
I: All right. So thinking about when you came to the UK, and you moved from your studies in China to the UK, were the first two years in China very different to the last year that you've had in (omitted for anonymity)? Yes?	
A: <b>{China v UK} {academic culture} It's quite different.</b>	China v UK  Academic culture
I: OK. Can you tell me what some of the differences have been?	
A: First it's that we always, in China I always have. So my courses, my lectures always have a lot of students. It's 100, or above. But here, my classes usually have 20 or 30 students, <b>{group size} so it's a much smaller group.</b> And <b>{academic culture} I talked a lot with my personal tutor or my teachers, but in China, so the teacher and the students react a little. And students here will ask questions in lectures if they don't understand, they will ask the lecturers</b>	Group size Academic culture

<b>directly, but in China we don't.</b>	
I: And I can't remember if I've asked you already, but in lectures here have you ever asked questions during the lecture?	
A: No.	
I: No. Why not?	
A: It's because <b>{not understand} I can't understand the language, so I didn't understand the context. So I have no questions.</b> And I think the style here is more independent, and you need to do a lot of research work, write a lot of papers like that. <b>{academic culture} But in China, we just need to recite all of the knowledge and do the exams. In the exams, the questions are usually simple, and they only focus one thing.</b> And for example they just do, the question will ask what's the definition of some terms, but the exams here, they will ask that you need to discuss this term. So it's so different.	Not understand  Academic culture China v UK
I: Yeah. And when you first came to (omitted for anonymity)and you joined your group of students, did you understand what was expected of you in those different interactions? So did you understand what you were expected to do in the lab, did you understand what you were expected to do in tutorials? Did you understand what you were expected to do in group work?	
A: No. <b>{academic culture} When I first come here I don't know, yeah.</b>	Academic culture
I: And how did you learn what was expected? So how did you learn what you were supposed to do in those interactions?	
A: <b>{LPP expert novice} Of the other students' behaviour.</b> Yeah.	LPP expert novice observe
I: And the students that you were observing, how did you choose who, did you just observe the people that were next to you? Or did you choose people that you wanted to observe?	
A: No, not certain people I'd observe, but sometimes I, for example <b>{LPP expert novice} I find that they think a lot in the lectures, and they ask a lot of questions, so I think maybe I'm expected to do that. And they usually have a lot of discussions with each other about the topics we have in the lecture. And they usually read a lot, and so I think maybe I'm expected to do that.</b>	LPP expert novice Observe/ copy
I: So nobody actually told you about that, you just watched what other people were doing and did the same. Did you ever ask the people on your course? So did you learn everything just by watching from a distance and, you know, watching them have discussions, or did you ever ask them "What do we do?"	
A: Yeah.	
I: <b>{LPP Question peers} You did ask them?</b>	LPP Question peers
A: Yeah.	
I: Yeah. And did you find that they were helpful?	
A: <b>{peers willing} Yeah. They are really nice.</b>	Peers willing
I: OK. So they helped you to understand what the courses were like here?	
A: Yeah.	
I: Mhm. And you said that you're the only Two Plus Two student on your course as well. So was it easy coming into that group of students, or was it quite difficult coming in? So you were the only new student in third year. Was that easy or was that a difficult experience?	
A: <b>{Transition -} I think it's difficult. But the main difficulties is language.</b> Yeah. They are all very kind, so if I have field trip with them, or they have parties, they	Transition –

go out, yeah, <b>{integration} they will invite me. I will join them.</b> And, yeah, and sometimes I will talk with them and <b>{peers willing} they will help me.</b> But it's like, it's much easier for English speaking people to make friends with them. For me it's <b>{communication -} very difficult because of the language.</b> If I can chat with them, will.	Integration Peers willing NES Communication -
I: OK. OK. So I mean, now are you happy with the spoken interactions that you have on your course? Do you feel like you could still improve?	
A: Yeah, I can still improve. And I improved a lot, yeah.	
I: So you already feel that you've improved?	
A: Yeah.	
I: Yeah. What do you think you've improved the most?	
A: It's the-. The most? Yeah, <b>{understanding +} I can understand more what they are talking about.</b> Yeah.	Understanding +
I: Do you think that you're becoming more fluent as well? Do you think you're finding it easier to speak a little?	
A: A little. Just a little. Because actually <b>{interaction} I speak not very often with them, but I listen a lot.</b>	Interaction
I: OK. OK. And so it seems that one of the biggest factor that's really affected you during the course has been the language, has been being able to communicate and listen and to speak with them as well. OK. Can I just ask, in your accommodation are you with other international students or are you with Chinese students?	
A: International students.	
I: International students. <b>{interaction social} So you're interacting with people using English-</b>	Interaction social
A: <b>Yeah, yeah.</b>	
I: -on your course and outside your course as well. OK. Is that quite tiring?	
A: Yeah, a little.	
I: Now, before you came to the UK, why did you choose to come on the Two Plus Two program? So why did you want to finish your degree in the UK?	
A: <b>{2+2 motivation} I just want to experience study, yeah.</b>	2+2 motivation
I: And did you think at all that you wanted to be able to interact with native speakers of English?	
A: Yeah.	
I: Yeah. So you wanted to be part of that community? <b>{CoP membership} Do you feel that you are part of that community?</b>	CoP membership
A: <b>Sometimes.</b>	
I: Sometimes.	
A: Yeah.	
I: Mhm. And sometimes you don't?	
A: Yeah.	
I: OK. So when you don't, what is the reason why you don't feel a part of it? A: For example, on our field trip, <b>{understanding -} because I can't understand them, follow their discussion,</b> so I speaked, yeah, <b>{silent} I kept silent almost all of the time.</b> And so <b>{LPP positioning} during the experiment they don't talk with me if they have any problems.</b> Yeah, so. Yeah, if they are thinking about "what can we do to improve the experiment?" they will talk with each other, but they won't talk with me, yeah.	Understanding - Silence LPP positioning
I: And how does that make you feel when that happens?	

A: It's so upset.	
I: Mhm. Mhm. And do you have ideas? So do you have ideas to help with these problems that they're discussing?	
A: Sometimes I have, <b>{LPP positioning} but if I have, even though they didn't ask me, I will talk with them.</b> But sometimes I don't have.	LPP positioning
I: And when you do have ideas and they talk, and you talk to them, do you feel like they value your ideas, or do you feel like they just dismiss them?	
A: It depends. Some people, yeah, some people may have discussed with me about the ideal. But some people don't. They will reject it directly.	
I: And <b>{LPP positioning} you feel that they would prefer to speak to other native speakers on the course about the problems than you?</b>	LPP positioning
<b>A: Yeah.</b>	
I: OK. And does that mean that sometimes you don't feel as knowledgeable as them? Like do you feel sometimes that they see you as someone who has less knowledge about the subject?	
A: Yeah. Yeah. <b>{LPP positioning} But it's not true actually.</b> When they have discussion, I though "Oh, the topic is so difficult, I can't understand it at all." But after doing the experiment with them, and we started to ana-	LPP positioning
I: Analyse.	
A:-analyse the result, and I can't understand their discussion, but when I looked the notes, I find that some analysis is wrong. And we can do a lot improvement in the experiment. So I thought that it's not difficult for me at all, but it's just because I can't understand when they are talking.	
I: OK. And so when you had those ideas about how to improve the experiment, did you tell them?	
A: Yeah.	
I: Yeah. And did they agree with your ideas?	
A: Sometimes. But sometimes don't.	
I: OK. OK. But you're interacting with them at the same time. OK.	
A: Yeah.	
I: Do you think that your identity as a student, and sort of how you think of yourself as a student has changed since you came to (omitted for anonymity)?	
A: Changed?	
I: Yeah. Do you think that you have changed in your last year in (omitted for anonymity)?	
A: Changed?	
I: Yeah.	
A: You refer to the-	
I: To your identity. How you think about yourself. Do you think that you have changed, or do you think you're still the same student as you were in China?	
A: <b>{identity} Identity is-. No. But I'm more confident to go abroad. Yeah, I mean, when I was in China, I only think about what I can do in China. But since I came here, I will think about what can I do in the world, not China only.</b>	Identity
I: So you feel more like an international, like a member of an international community?	
A: Yeah. Yeah.	
I: Is that a good feeling?	
A: Yeah.	
I: Yeah? Excellent. And let me just quickly check through here. Excellent. So I think that they're all the questions that I've got for you at the moment. Do you	



have any final comments that you want to make about sort of speaking on your course and your experience of communicating with other people on your course?	
A: No, I think that's all.	

**Coded transcript: Tutor 2**

I: Can I just double check, which course is it that you teach the 2+2s on?	
T2: I teach them on (course title).	
I: And how many students do you usually get from 2+2 in your courses?	
T2: One or two a year.	

I: One or two a year. OK. So it's not that many of the number that come over. It's a number of the ones that come into this group.	
T2: It's quite a number of the (course title) group. <b>{group size} The plant sciences group is small, so, yeah.</b>	Group size
I: And can I just ask a couple of questions about the actual course first of all? What kind of interactions take place on the course?	
T2: They're very different. So the (module title) has some <b>{interaction} plain lectures, it has some more workshop classes where they're doing a little bit of lecture then some microscope work, some dissections and back again. It has guided discussion tours of the botanic gardens, so it has a number of different things. In the (course title) honours, we have seminar discussions, data analysis classes, some practical demonstrations, lots of skills teaching stuff. Paper discussion, yeah.</b>	Interaction
I: So there's quite a lot of discussion that goes on in a-	
T2: Lot of different things. And assessment by presentations as well.	
I: OK. And are they group presentations, or are they individual?	
T2: No, it's individual.	
I: And then with a Q and A session afterwards, obviously?	
T2: Yeah.	
I: And so with the data analysis and the practical demonstrations, you suggested that those are kind of communicative ones as well. They're expected to ask and answer questions during those?	
T2: Yes.	
I: And then in the lectures are they also expected to ask questions, or are they encouraged to sort of stop the lecturer and ask questions, or-?	
T2: So the lectures that I teach in (module title) <b>{tutor expectations} I expect students to ask questions in. In all the final year stuff it's a small class.</b> It's between, say, I don't know, four and twelve each year. <b>{interaction} So they're all sort of very discussion based classes.</b>	Tutor expectations Interaction
I: Do they do any group work at all?	
T2: Not in the final year, (course). In (course), the stuff that I teach they don't. They work in pairs on some of the things, but not that they're assessed on.	
I: OK, so they don't have like groups of three or four students doing presentations together, or things like that, or project writing?	
T2: No.	
I: OK. And generally how successful are the 2+2 students compared to the continuing students that have come onto the course?	
T2: So the ones that I've taught, it's been a fair mix. I mean it's hard to generalise over a group of students. <b>{silence} But they will tend to be a bit quieter. They're not going to be the first people to ask questions, and in a discussion group you often have to ask questions.</b> They've also been not the most assured at giving presentations. Some of the students we've had have been really at a total loss in presentation, whereas the home students are very	Silence

<p>much assured. I mean the home students make presentations that are-. I mean over the past ten years they've got better and better and better every year, so, like, we've seen some really, really professional presentations from some home students. And I don't think this is something that the 2+2 students have much experience of, because they make a lot of sort of rookie mistakes and-.</p>	
<p>I: And with the continuing students, are they a mixture of international students and home students, as well?</p>	
<p>T2: Yes. In (course title) we have a high proportion of international students and lots of folk from the EU.</p>	
<p>I: OK. And they're also really good at doing those presentations and things like that as well?</p>	
<p>T2: Yeah.</p>	
<p>I: OK. And happy to ask questions?</p>	
<p>T2: Very happy to ask questions, [inc], yeah.</p>	
<p>I: That's something I've been hearing quite a bit, actually, about the Europeans being the more forthcoming.</p>	
<p>T2: The Europeans, Yes, certainly. They're more forward and the more sort of professional in their approach to things, they're very good.</p>	
<p>I: OK. OK, that's interesting.</p>	
<p>T2: This is one of the things I worry about Brexit, because we're not going to have such good classes any more.</p>	
<p>I: Oh, really?</p>	
<p>T2: Because they're really engaged and enthusiastic and knowledgeable students we get coming in from Europe. And the home students are generally not as good. I mean it's an unusual year where the firsts go to home students. They're more likely to go to international students.</p>	
<p>I: OK. That's really kind of what I've heard from other departments as well. As far as you're aware, the 2+2 students, do they tend to stick together, or do they integrate well with the other students that are on the course?</p>	
<p>T2: It depends. <b>{integration} In some years they've been quite close, and in other years they've had their own friendship groups.</b> This year just gone for (course title) honours, we only had one 2+2 student. <b>{peers willing} And she did struggle a lot, and she was very much supported by the other people in the group. It wasn't a big class, there was six of them this year. And they really helped it a lot. They just include her and encourage her and, you know, did study sessions for her and things.</b></p>	<p>Integration Peers willing</p>
<p>I: And is that the (penultimate) year that's just finished?</p>	
<p>T2: Yes. Oh, sorry, no, that's the (final) year that's just finished.</p>	
<p>I: The (final) year that's just finished. Do you do field trips at all?</p>	
<p>T2: Yes.</p>	
<p>I: Do you go abroad?</p>	

T2: Yeah, we do. I don't take them.	
I: And you have seen, though, that some of the students are really supportive?	
T2: Mhm. <b>{peers willing} That's how they appeared to me.</b>	Peers willing
I: That's how they appeared to you. So we've already sort of established that the presentations have been a weakness with them. What about in the guided discussions and in the seminars? How do they cope in those?	
T2: <b>{silence} Quiet, generally.</b>	Silence
I: Very quiet?	
T2: Uh-huh. Some of them more assured and more together than others, <b>{silence} but always at the quieter end of the scale.</b>	Silence
I: And do you pick on them and ask them to join in, or do you leave it to them?	
T2: Yes. It's a small group. <b>{silence} It would be really weird to have somebody not contributing, so, you know. You ask them directly.</b>	Silence
I: And how do they cope with that?	
T2: All right, yeah.	
I: So they manage it, but they're just hesitant to actually start. Have you noticed any of the general weaknesses of the 2+2 students?	
T2: <b>{2+2 expert} They're very good on sort of knowledge about things, sort of factual knowledge</b> , and I have a colleague who supervises one said he was really impressed with her maths, and her ability to manage analytical stuff. But where <b>{2+2 novice} they struggle more is in taking a critical attitude towards papers, in bringing stuff together and creating an overall viewpoint.</b> One of the examples that we have in final year is the [inc] exam, which asks very broad range questions. That kind of broad range question, and they get three hours to write an essay on it. And the 2+2 students often struggle in that, because if they're given sort of directed questions, they can do very well with it. But being able to pull stuff together from lots of different places, construct an argument and write it out coherently and convincing, in a foreign language. It's really hard.	2+2 expert 2+2 novice
I: I mean I couldn't do it in a different language.	
T2: Exactly.	
I: So do they get much sort of support from the tutors when they first come in? Because it seems like they don't know how to be critical and how to synthesise things. Like how much support do they get from the tutors on the course?	
T2: Personal tutors?	
I: Personal tutors or tutors teach-, yeah, do you?	
T2: <b>{2+2 support} I don't think they get a lot of sort of individual special help from them.</b> I mean, and, <b>{2+2 introductions} teaching a (penultimate) year course you're not always aware of who's a 2+2 student and who's not. I've got some students coming through (the penultimate) year at the moment. I</b>	2+2 support 2+2 introductions

<b>don't know if they're 2+2 or not. They're Chinese and they do ask a lot of questions, and I help them out with question, but I don't know if they're 2+2 or not.</b>	
I: So you wouldn't actually know at all if they'd just come into the penultimate year or whether they were continuing?	
T2: No.	
I: Nobody says anything?	
T2: I mean you could look it up, if you looked through your class list.	
I: But you wouldn't really look up the background of every single student.	
T2: And it's not easy to look it up in (institution database). You'd have to, yeah, go through each individual record, so-	
I: OK. <b>{2+2 introductions} So none of the teachers actually have any idea whether these students have literally just arrived in the UK, and have been through any other schooling?</b>	2+2 introductions
<b>T2: Not a clue.</b>	
I: Do you think that it would be a good idea if they did know? Do you think that it would, or do you think it makes no difference?	
T2: Well given as we do get notes saying, you know, that so and so has got dyslexia, so and so has got whatever this kind of stuff, then yeah I think we should know. I don't know how much can be done to help the students in the class setting. But I think it might be useful.	
I: Do you know what the education system's like in China, or not? Just out of curiosity. Do you think it's the same? Do you think their first two years of university, do you think their experience is the same or not?	
T2: <b>{Academic culture} I think they're totally different.</b> I mean the transcripts that I've seen, because I'm PT for some 2+2 students, so I've seen their transcripts, and (name) and (name) have talked to me about 2+2 as well. Actually I did have quite a long chat with (name) about trying to match up the 2+2 requirements for the last two years with what we actually offered, <b>{content} and they don't mesh very well</b> , so it's difficult to present to the Chinese universities what they want. But having seen the transcripts, it looks really very different from what we do here, in that there's lots more courses, lots more focused courses.	Academic culture China v UK  Content
I: So the actual kind of content knowledge that they're coming with doesn't really give them the foundation that they need when they're coming into third year.	
T2: <b>{content} I've had some students coming through who don't have any (course),</b> which is very-	Content
I: And how do you cope with that? Or how did they cope with that?	
T2: <b>{2+2 support} Well I recommended some basic textbooks, and that they work their way through and ask me if they've got any questions.</b>	2+2 support
I: But they cope with it?	
T2: Yeah. <b>{3<sup>rd</sup> year disadvantage} But it's not ideal, because even going</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> year

through to the final year you can see these big gaps in their knowledge, and it's not as easy and familiar to them as it is for other students who have been working at these concepts and ideas for, you know, eight or nine years.	disadvantage
I: Wow. That's a big issue. A big issue.	
T2: Yes, yeah.	
I: That's about registration and going over-	
T2: This might be because students that are coming into plant sciences have been coming through sort of agricultural stream, and agricultural universities, and haven't had to deal with sort of molecular genetics on this level before. And maybe students who are 2+2 in other honours programmes don't have these issues so much. <b>{content} But yeah, there are some alarming gaps.</b>	Content
I: So they've come from a very different learning background. They've got a different knowledge background, like content knowledge background as well. That's a huge transition for them to be coming into. And then they're obviously-	
T2: <b>{transition} I think it's really, really hard.</b> And I think given as our four year degrees are set up to take people from really quite a low level background, I mean we get some people in who have got very sketchy biology backgrounds, and first year's in part set up to try and deal with this. And [inc] first year finally get established will be much better at that. <b>{3<sup>rd</sup> year disadvantage}</b> <b>They would do better coming in in first and second year. And learning how we learn here along with everyone else. And that would give them two years grace of being able to get into this style.</b>	Transition  3 <sup>rd</sup> year disadvantage
I: Because third year counts towards the final thing.	
T2: It does.	
I: So first year and second year are-	
T2: You just need to pass.	
I: You just need to pass, right.	
T2: So they come in in third year, they've got the culture shock, they've got to try and fit in, they're struggling in another language, they're struggling with the different learning style, and everything counts. It's, I don't think it's fair on them.	
I: It's not fair on them?	
T2: No, I think it would be much better if they did their two years in China and then came in for the first year here. It would make it a very long stint, but they would do much better with it. And <b>{3<sup>rd</sup> year disadvantage} they would naturally get some benefit out of what they're doing here rather than always feeling they're behind and having to catch up.</b> Because some of them are very bright, and they're very determined, and they're struggling under a really difficult burden.	3 <sup>rd</sup> year disadvantage
I: Yes, that's the impression that I've had. I think, year on year, I've seen, I mean I've only been teaching 2+2 students for about four years, I've only been managing the course a couple of years, but I've noticed an increase-	
T2: They've only been around about four years haven't they? I've never-	

I: No, we've been doing the programme for well over ten years.	
T2: God. OK.	
I: So maybe they're new into your field.	
T2: Oh, maybe, yeah.	
I: But for engineering especially they've been coming for years and years. But I've noticed an increase in their, you know, their ability year on year. So you mentioned culture shock and, you know, the second language. Do you see the culture? Like can you see that there's an element of culture shock or not? Or do you just get a sense of it?	
T2: I don't know if I pick it up so much in the students I'm just teaching, but the ones I've been PT to, <b>{transition} you could tell they're really just a bit lost when they first come.</b> Yeah. I'm sure they've got a lot of support to help them, but still it's a big transition and yeah, you see the effect on them.	Transition
I: As their personal tutor, do they feel comfortable talking to you about their concerns and their worries, or?	
T2: <b>{silence} Some of them are more forward than others, but again they tend to be a bit quiet.</b> <b>{understanding} And I'm not quite sure always if what I'm saying is getting through to them properly.</b>	Silence Understanding
I: Do you mean that from the point of view that their listening isn't so good, or just that they just don't understand the kind of advice you're giving them because it's a bit different?	
T2: I think they just don't [inc].	
I: I looked online, and I noticed that for first year students there's, I'm not sure if it's in your department specifically, there's like a buddy scheme where the third years	
<b>T2: {support} Yes, (scheme name).</b>	Support
<b>I: Yeah, (scheme name). Are the 2+2 students able to join that or not?</b>	
<b>T2: I don't know. It is supposed to be just for sort of first years, so I'm not sure if they're made a-, I'm not sure if it's available to them. And it's quite focused around particular sort of tasks and tests, assessments and things in first year, so it might be less valuable to a third year student.</b>	
I: That's what I was going to ask was do you think that it could be beneficial for them to go, to be able to go to it just to get a sense of what's being done, or something like that.	
T2: It probably wouldn't hurt.	
I: It probably, it wouldn't hurt?	
T2: It wouldn't hurt, yeah.	
I: And generally with their language proficiency, would you say that they come with a suitable, like an adequate proficiency of English, or would you say that they're noticeably weaker?	
T2: The ones I've taught recently <b>{proficiency} I think adequate,</b> yeah. I think the problems are elsewhere. <b>{academic culture} More in sort of learning style</b>	Proficiency

<p><b>and the background. Their {proficiency} English is really not so bad at all. I mean I've had students with worse English, you know, coming from - [coughs] excuse me- coming from India or people whose English has just really been a bit odd. Europe and [inc]. And they've managed as well. So I don't think it's too bad at all.</b></p>	<p>Academic culture</p> <p>Proficiency</p>
<p>I: I wanted to ask whether you tell your students what you expect them to do in the classroom.</p>	
<p>T2: <b>{expectations} We have a lot of guidelines in the course book, so forth, yeah. That's all pretty clearly laid out. And all the assessment forms and criteria for assessment, the criteria for different marks are all in the course book.</b></p>	<p>Expectations</p>
<p><b>I: Do you think that they read it?</b></p>	
<p><b>T2: That's up to them. You'd imagine general advice would be to read the course book, so yeah.</b></p>	
<p>I: It would be, but knowing some of the students that I know, I don't know if that happens very frequently.</p>	
<p>T2: I don't have a lot of sympathy [inc] course [inc].</p>	
<p>I: When they do their presentations, their assessed presentations, do they get feedback on the speaking?</p>	
<p>T2: Yes, yeah.</p>	
<p>I: And does that mainly revolve around like the content, or do you talk to them about the structure, the grammar, the, everything?</p>	
<p>T2: The whole lot.</p>	
<p>I: The whole lot.</p>	
<p><b>T2: {tutor expert/ peers expert} And they get feedback from the, there's usually two staff members assessing them, and we get feedback from the other students as well. They all assess each other. And talk to each other.</b></p>	<p>Tutor expert/ peers expert</p>
<p>I: Yes, I noticed that on the outline it said, you know, feedback provided by peers and staff. Which I thought was interesting. Do you think that they take on that feedback and improve it, or?</p>	
<p>T2: Usually, yeah. I mean the courses where we do that, you can see them improve along, along the course. They're better and better and more relaxed, so yeah.</p>	
<p>I: So do they do frequent presentations on the course?</p>	
<p>T2: Yeah.</p>	
<p>I: And what kind of feedback do the peers give? Are they quite good at giv-</p>	
<p>T2: Yeah, some of the students have been really thorough and detailed. Yeah, we've had some very useful feedback from the students to each other.</p>	
<p>I: And does that kind of peer feedback start in first year, or does it just come in in third year, do you know? You might not know.</p>	
<p>T2: I think it does. Sorry, I don't-</p>	
<p>I: You don't teach those earlier years.</p>	



T2: I don't teach first years, though I am (states departmental responsibilities), so I hear about it all second hand, but I don't [inc]. But yeah, they do have peer feedback from first and second year.	
I: OK. And do you think that when the 2+2s are in the classroom, <b>{LPP expert novice} do you think that they are using the continuing students as kind of models for what they're supposed to be doing?</b>	LPP expert novice
<b>T2: Yes. Yes.</b>	
I: Do you think that they're learning a lot from the continuing students?	
T2: Yeah.	
I: Have you seen it? Like can you think of a specific-? Any specific things that they might be learning, or is it just that you can see that they're listening and watching, and-? Sorry, it's a tricky question.	
T2: So this year we had one 2+2 student in the plant science honours course. And she was really <b>{silence} quite quiet and nervous coming in</b> . As the year went on, she became better at expressing herself and <b>{integration} more part of the group</b> . And things like the honours presentations, we had a practice session on the Thursday, and they did their final presentations on the Tuesday. And on the Thursday <b>{LPP expert novice} they whole class spent basically all of the day giving presentations and discussing each other's presentations and making suggestions and things. And the 2+2 student's presentation in the practice was a bit. And on the final thing she was much better. She had taken on board a lot of the discussions, and just having seen everybody else's presentations had clearly picked up bits from it, and yeah.</b>	Silence Integration LPP expert novice
I: So that's really good.	
T2: Yes	
I: That's really helpful for them.	
T2: It was a good group this year, though. They were all very friendly and helpful, and it was, it was nice to-	
I: It's funny, you have some years like that, don't you, when they're just fantastic and it just seems to gel and work together really well.	
T2: But yes I think was it four, five years ago, we had a group that were just really lumpen and you had to [inc] to get anything out of them.	
I: I've got a question here about integrations, but you said it's a very small group. So they do integrate, <b>{integration} they kind of have to integrate, almost.</b>	Integration
<b>T2: They do, very well, yeah. Exactly.</b>	
I: And I was looking at the, the learning outcomes from your courses and it talks, I mean we've discussed <i>competent oral presentations and critical thinking</i> . So it says in here, but this isn't third and fourth year, it says <i>using communication to work effectively in groups, while respecting the views of other, creating essays, reports, and lab reports in groups</i> . But you said that doesn't happen so much in that one.	
T2: We don't do that.	
<b>I: {course aims} And it says here that you're trying to enable students to</b>	Course aims

grow in confidence and ability. That's the kind of development that you're expecting. Would you say on a whole that that happens?	
T2: Yes. Yeah.	
I: In the lab do they work in {group work} groups?	Group work
T2: Sometimes, yeah.	
I: Sometimes. And they seem to-?	
T2: Yeah, {integration - } the 2+2 students I've had in the third year course that I teach the lab classes have tended to work together if they can. And they've been very good in the lab. Very organised, {LPP expert novice} asking a lot of sensible questions, yeah.	Integration – LPP expert novice
I: Is there anything else that you've noticed specifically about 2+2 students, or anything that you kind of want to mention about your experience of teaching the 2+2 students?	
T2: Well I think I've already said {transition} I think it's really particularly hard on them to come into a course where they're assessed straight away. Particularly where they've got such big gaps it's difficult for them to catch up. And {3 <sup>rd</sup> year disadvantage} the best way around I would see is for them to start earlier.	Transition 3 <sup>rd</sup> year disadvantage
I: Yeah. Almost just do the full degree.	
T2: Do the full degree, yeah. And then they'd be in a much better position for going for MScs or PhDs or [inc], because they would have got the full benefit out of their-. I think the students that I've seen come through 2+2, they've not done as well as they should have done with their ability, because they've been so hampered by these gaps and that difficulty of being dumped in the middle of a degree programme.	
I: I mean do they all pass the course?	
T2: Yes. Yes. Yes.	
I: But just not with the kind of grades that they're capable of getting.	
T2: Exactly. And {3 <sup>rd</sup> year disadvantage} I don't think they've got the best benefit out of things, as well, because they've just got by.	3 <sup>rd</sup> year disadvantage
I: I remember talking to, when I first started talking to the tutors when I was taking over, they were saying they've got to hit the ground running when they come here.	
T2: It would be hard enough if all they had to do was deal with the language and the cultural and the learning stuff. {content} But they've also got gaps in their knowledge, and a lot of the students that I've taught have.[inc] they can't do it [inc].	Content
I: It's huge, so they've got a huge amount of self-study to do as well. So the pressure on them is quite immense.	
T2: {3 <sup>rd</sup> year disadvantage} I don't think it's easy at all. I wouldn't recommend people do it, to be honest.	3 <sup>rd</sup> year disadvantage
I: Really?	
T2: Yeah. So if a student got in touch and said "I'm thinking about doing this	

programme", you'd say it's-	
T2: Yeah.	
I: -probably not worth it.	
T2: That they might do better finishing their undergraduate degree in China and then coming here for a taught MSc. Even that would be better.	
I: Do you think they'd be able to do the taught MSc quite well?	
T2: It depends.	
I: Because you've only got a year then, haven't you, to try and?	
T2: It would depend on what degree they'd done in China whether they had the background for it. But at least there they would plan for an MSc where they had the biological background. <b>{3<sup>rd</sup> year disadvantage} Then they'd only be struggling with other things.</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> year disadvantage
I: Yeah. Do you get any other visiting students that come in for just a semester, or-?	
T2: We get quite a lot of visiting students in plant sciences, and-	
I: Because I know throughout the university, I don't know so much what happens in the science and engineering, but I know that we do, for example, courses for visiting students.	
T2: We don't do courses specifically for visiting students, but we have a fair number of visiting students that do our plant courses. And they're usually very good.	
I: Do they come from around the world as well? Are they from all over?	
T2: Yes. There's a fair number from the states. Some from the other universities in Europe. An occasional one from the far East, but that's less common.	
I: And they cope absolutely fine with that sort of [inc].	
T2: Usually some of them are very, very good. Some of them, the sort of factual content we're teaching them they know already. And it's more [inc] the broader level stuff for, you know, discussing particular papers, taking a different viewpoint on things, the practical work, this kind of stuff.	
<b>I: How well do the 2+2 deal with discussing papers?</b>	
<b>T2: {2+2 novice} Quite poorly, yeah.</b>	<b>2+2 novice</b>
I: They do badly with it. I'm guessing that you're expecting them to kind of read it and critically evaluate it and things, and they're not, very good at that.	
T2: Yeah. They're not [inc]. Which is a real problem in the final year, because we expect them to be able to do classes where everyone's read a different paper, and we can then sit together and discuss things and come up with a consensus about this particular biological problem, and if they haven't been able to grasp the paper they've read, and they're not picking up the discussion, then they're really missing out.	
I: So they're unable to engage with it critically, but they're also unable, are they able to? Well then they're unable to express what the paper's about.	

T2: Yeah.	
I: {silence} And then do they struggle to join in with the discussion about the other papers as well?	Silence
T2: Yes, definitely.	
I: And then that has an impact on the other students in the class too, doesn't it.	
T2: And it affects the 2+2 students' ability to produce good assessed work. Because we're assuming people have read these papers and discussed them. And if they haven't been able to take them all on board, then they're not able to produce the, the broad ranging written work that we're looking for.	
I: If the 2+2 programme continues, which I think it's going to, and if you continue to take 2+2 students onto your course, do you think that there are any steps that can be taken to help with that transition? Do you think that-	
T2: Well there is a summer school for them, isn't there, you know, to help get them settled in?	
I: It depends on which school they're coming into.	
T2: Oh really?	
I: So I know that some geosciences only get the writing pre-sessional. They don't get the full, the extra four weeks in the summer. So it depends on which department they're coming into.	
T2: OK. {pre-course support} I think that's a very valuable thing, giving them a little bit of a chance to get established. And I think some sort of interview with tutors to find out what their gaps are in the time before they come here. So they have a chance to, well for example if they're missing molecular biology they {pre-course support} have a chance to read up on it before they get here.	Pre-course support Pre-course support
I: So you mean quite a long time, like just initially when they're offered a place, like at the beginning of the summer?	
T2: When they're accepted. Yes.	
I: So now a lot of them will have been accepted. I think I'm just starting to get the numbers through for next year, so they must have a good idea of who's coming.	
T2: {pre-course support} I think to have some kind of assessment there of what gaps they might have, and to ask for recommended reading from the courses that they're going to be going to, to make sure that they're up to speed. Or perhaps giving them access to the-	Pre-course support
I: The materials.	
T2: -the (online platform) sites for the second year courses. That would be probably the best. {pre-course support} That they get the online slides for the recommended second year courses for whatever courses they're doing. And get advised to work through 'em and get any questions to the course organisers.	Pre-course support
I: So they already know which modules they're going to be taking before they come here?	

T2: I don't know.	
I: Or do they choose them when they come here?	
T2: The ones that I've dealt with have chosen when they've come here, but I assume the ones that I've dealt with have been directed by their home universities about what they're supposed to be doing. So they would know before they came what they want to do.	
I: OK, so really getting onto it earlier would be much more beneficial.	
T2: Yeah, I think so.	
I: And possible.	
T2: Yeah.	
I: I mean that doesn't sound like it's an impossible task to do. It'd take a bit more organisation, but it doesn't sound impossible.	
T2: And there aren't so many second year courses, so it'd be easy to give them access to all the second year courses and say "Look, these are the particular ones you'll need for your chosen modules."	
I: Yeah. And even though they won't have an in-depth knowledge, they'll have a better understanding of [inc]	
T2: And they'll have a chance to see what the learning style is like before they come here. If they can look over the PowerPoints and the sort of assessments, and they'll have a better idea of what to expect.	
I: Yeah. Do you have PowerPoints for each of your lectures that you do?	
T2: Yeah.	
I: Do the students still attend the lectures, or do they?	
T2: Yes they do.	
I: Just checking.	
T2: Maybe not all of them do, but they'll, we have fairly good attendance for the plant science stuff. In the plant science honours, if people don't show up we realise it because there's an empty seat. <b>{group size} It's a small group.</b>	Group size
I: I was going to say, yeah, if it's such a small group you can't really hide.	
I: [inc] sick, and people phone them up, so yeah.	
I: OK, oh that's good then. OK. That's good. It sounds good though, I mean it sounds like it's a good thing having such a small course, because it does allow for a less intimidating sort of forum for the 2+2s to come into [inc]	
T2: <b>{integration} I think it might depend a bit on the course composition. I mean who's there. I mean some years are friendlier and nicer than others, but they're plant scientists, they tend to be friendly and nice [inc]. It's just the way they are.</b>	Integration
I: OK. Well I don't have any more questions, so unless you've got anything else that you want to say.	
T2: Nope.	
I: Thanks.	

**Appendix E**  
**Sample table of topics arising from coding during data analysis**

CODES	Karen	Luke	Arthur	Sherlock	Aote	Max	Stephan	Ben	Sam
expert@novice@LPP									
Observed@peers		1			1	1			
question@peers		1			1		1	1	1
question@teacher			1				1		1
observe@model@Student						1	1	1	
copy@peers@behaviour					1	1			
copy@peers@language	1						1		1
learn@by@doing			1			1			
participant@acts@as@expert							1		
continuing@peer@as@leader@group@work)	1	1				1			1
tutor@as@expert	1							1	
participant@rejected@by@CoP		1							
participants@ideas@rejected@by@CoP		1	1		1				
participation@of@novice@denied		1	1						
continuing@peers@ask@participant@for@help									
LPP@positioning		1	1	1	1				1
participant@treated@as@CoP@member						1	1		1
not@know@what@to@do@tutor@expectations)	1	1	1		1	1	1		1
peers@adapt@language@involved@participant	1		1						
CoP@membership@					1	1	1	1	1
CoP@membership@		1	1						
difficult@to@join@CoP		1	1	1		1		1	
peers@willing					1		1		1
learn@through@experience			1			1			
7-9@students									
4-6@students									
0-3@students									

## Appendix F Communicative course outcomes

*Note: These have been collated from all departments participating in the 2+2 programme and edited to ensure anonymity of the institution.*

### **Programme outcomes: Graduate attributes- Skills and abilities in communication**

Communication skills are important: to convey scientific knowledge to other scientists, to inform and communicate to the wider community and to demonstrate graduate attributes to employers. Skills comprise:

- Oral and written communication that is logical and coherent (project, poster and paper presentations)
- Communicating effectively in groups while respecting the views of others
- Problem solving exercises either independently or working in groups
- Working in groups for presentations
- Working effectively in a group, either as group leader or as a team member
- Communicating concepts and ideas with the wider public, demonstrating an understanding of the relevance and importance of explaining scientific ideas and the impact of science to the wider community.

Collaborative activities include:

- Working in groups on projects, group talks or laboratory work
- Collaborating efficiently and productively with others in the process of learning and presentation
- Building confidence from completion of assignments and from successful work experiences in laboratory, projects, presentations and essays
- Utilising advice gained from discussions with a Personal Tutor, Course Organisers and Honours Programme organisers.

### **How will I learn?**

You will be taught through a combination of lectures, tutorials, laboratory sessions, projects and group work. In your final years you will dedicate more time to private study and will receive individual supervision with projects.