EVERYDAY COMMUNICATION AND IDENTITY WORK OF
CHINESE STUDENTS IN AUSTRALIA

by

Bin Ai

Bachelor of Arts, CCNU, PRC
Master of Management, CCNU, PRC
Master of Science in Education, UWP, USA

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Deakin University
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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this research project was to capture and analyse the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students in an Australian university. In doing so, I applied institutional ethnography as a method of inquiry to illuminate the lived experiences of Chinese students inside and outside their university.

This thesis commences with an explanation as to why and for what purpose I was interested in this research project. The literature is reviewed from the affective, relational and rational dimensions of the experiences of international students, including Chinese students. Some gaps are identified in the literature review so as to outline research directions for this project.

I use institutional ethnography as a methodology that focuses on the standpoints of research participants so as to explore how various discourses and texts mediate their experiences of learning and living in Australia. I deploy such concepts as everyday life, communication, culture, identity and space to inform my theoretical framework, data analysis and discussion.

In Part Two and Part Three, I address two major interactive themes: everyday communication and identity work given that they both emerge in the interviews and representations of Chinese students. Chinese students also reveal the diverse forces involved in mediating their everyday life and identity negotiation in their new lived space. In Part Four, I re-examine the significance of this research project for the field of globalised higher education practice, since the everyday life of Chinese students is a window to re-examine this field from below and within. In this conclusion part, I also propose dialogism as pedagogy in the globalised educational practice.

The main findings drawn from this research project are:
1. Chinese cultural patterns have heavily influenced the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students in Australia. These influences are widely felt in their responses to everyday events inside and outside their university.
2. The process of becoming identity of Chinese students is represented in everyday life; the changes in their communication practices trigger their identity work.
3. The everyday communication of Chinese students is influenced by their identity work. The identity work of Chinese students is an intense and gradual project; its influences are unfinalisable in their everyday lives.

Keywords: Chinese students, Everyday life, Communication, Identity work
PREFACE
There are two main reasons that compelled me to write of myself in this research thesis. The first reason is that I wished to recount my experience of different identities in this autobiographic narrative. This is the most powerful reason for my interest in researching and writing about the topic of identity. I chose to narrate my story, since ‘using narrative of the self, the researcher goes on to say something about the larger cultural settings and scholarly discourse’ (Glesne 1992, 181). I also intended to invite readers into the text to re-live my experience (Schwandt 2001) so that they could gain an understanding of me and this thesis.

The second reason I wanted to write of my experiences is that I agree that ‘researchers should be aware of the ways in which their own biography is a fundamental part of the research process’ (May 1997, 21). In practice, ‘the values, attitudes, interests and autobiography of the researcher can be used in choosing a research topic’ (Merrill and West 2009, 112). One’s writing is closely related to his/her life and experience. This thesis is based on my research and my personal experience as well, since one’s knowledge of the world is inevitably filtered through his/her personal experience (Marvasti 2004). Similarly, my lived experience in Australia, alongside what I have experienced in my previous life, has significantly influenced my research and writing, including my own identity work in Australia.

1. My Lived Experience and Identity
To provide a representation of my identity in this project, I used my autobiographical self to provide the purpose of writing and explain my personal lived experience, by which my different identities are shaped and transformed. To present these identities, I began this account of my autobiographical self with the details of my origins.

I was born in the 1970s in the Centre of Mainland China. As a peasant’s son, I was born with a Nongye Hukou (agricultural Hukou, a household registration in China), an official identity of being born a peasant. I spent my childhood in a small isolated village. I recall that the ordinary peasants’ life in the Centre of China was very poor then. Gao (1999, 255), a Chinese-Australian scholar now, uses ‘two Chinas’ to divide the real China into ‘rural China’ and ‘urban China’, and he comments that ‘rural China is not only different from urban China economically, but also politically. What has happened in urban China can never be taken as the same as in rural China, or vice versa.’ To me, it is an accurate description of rural China at the end of last century.

None of my ancestors, including my parents, ever studied in a university, not to mention studying overseas. As ordinary peasants, my parents did not finish their middle school classes and then had to work in the collective crop fields to support their families. In China, peasants, including my parents, were influenced by Chinese feudal cultures and Confucian culture and positioned as the lowest class in the social hierarchy. The social identity of being a peasant means ‘poor, not educated and even no future’ (Gong 2009, 32). This also means that I was born with an identity issue.

My parents always hoped to change their inferior social status, though the cruel lived reality had crushed all their dreams. Yet, they never gave up their effort to help me leave the poor village so as to achieve a better social identity and a better life. They hoped that one day I would jump out of the bitter rural life and find a stable job as an
‘iron rice bowl’ (a stable job), becoming a citizen in a city or even in a small town. Living in a city would mean that I could have a Chengzhen Hukou (urban Hukou, an official identity of being a citizen). I dreamt that one day I would abolish my Nongye Hukou and get a Chengzhen Hukou, as a token of being a citizen in a city. I knew that this would mean a complete transformation of my identity.

Another motive to leave the village was the difficulty of the everyday life there. As a peasant’s son, I started to work with parents in the crop fields when I was a little boy. I recall feeling thirsty when working in the hot summer to remove weeds and pick up the black bean pods. I felt pain and hunger when I had no lunch to eat whilst looking for the Chinese traditional herbs in wild mountains so as to earn money for the family. In earning money for my tuition fees, I experienced panic and fear when bitten by leeches as a worker in the rice seedling fields. I also learnt what poison means when stung by centipedes, when I tried to catch and sell them as an ingredient for Chinese traditional medicine. I remember how my mother carried my old-style, heavy bicycle on her thin shoulders across the muddy ridges of rice fields so as to send me to middle school. These rural lived experiences, plus the expectation of my family, influenced my decision and convinced me to leave the village.

My journey to obtain a different social identity was an arduous one. At that time there seemed to be only two possible ways to obtain an urban Hukou and move into a city, one was to pass Gaokao (the university entrance examination) and the other was to serve in the Chinese army for a few years. If I was an excellent soldier, I might be promoted enabling me to transfer from being a rural soldier to a communist cadre. Such a step could help me get an urban Hukou and a new social identity. These two approaches were both difficult. At that time my desire to leave the village was fairly strong and like Gao (1999, xii), ‘I felt lonely, hopeless and alienated. I want to work in a factory; I want to be recruited into the army; I want to do anything just to leave the village.’ Nobody had a stronger desire than me to leave my village then, and this desire provided me with the courage to continue to shape my identity.

Fortunately, my life changed. I was recruited by the best high school in my county. After three years, I passed Gaokao and entered a university. After graduation from the university, I got a position as an English lecturer in a university located in Wuhan, the capital city of Hubei province. To outsiders, I have successfully obtained a different social identity, since I left the village and started my new life in a city. However, have I really removed my identity as that country boy? Every time that I returned to my village to visit my parents and brother, my neighbors still regarded me as the naughty boy brought up in the village. However, I was seen as different from my parents and brother who were still working on their land in the village. I often felt that I still belonged there. Every time I returned from my village to the city, the first thing that I did was to switch my village dialect, a representation of my rural identity, into the standard Chinese so that I could relocate myself in the city. My identity transition made me feel that I was a complex and contradictory individual. For a long time, my identity negotiation stayed with me and made me wonder just who I was.

Jenkins (2004, 6) reminds us that ‘change, or its prospect, is particularly likely to provoke concerns about identity.’ To me, these changes related to my primary identity made me think deeply about identity. The switching of identity also made me keep negotiating my rural and urban identities – between a peasant’s son and a city dweller.
For me, this identity puzzle may be a dilemma until I die, since such complex identity negotiation is ongoing.

2. English Language and Identity Work
In addition to my lived experience related to my identity work, my English language learning and teaching experience has also influenced my identity work. Here, identity work means ‘the continuous making and remaking of who we are’ (Ivanič 2006, 21). According to Edwards (1985, 1), ‘questions of language and identity are extremely complex.’ Identity (work) is related to language acquisition. If primary identity is shaped by and through one’s learning of a mother tongue, similarly, the learning of a foreign or second language can be considered as a person’s new identity work.

In the process of foreign or second language learning, other cultures and languages can reinforce and enrich us by affecting and destabilizing our ways of thinking and speaking. When we are gaining something new in this process, we are losing something habitual (Castro 1995). The relationship between language acquisition and identity work is reflected in my life, since my English acquisition has contributed to my identity work. My English language learning and teaching have not only influenced the process of becoming different but also reshaped my primary identity.

I started my learning of English language in my middle school in a small town. At that time, strictly speaking, there were no qualified English teachers, nor any pedagogical discussions on English learning and teaching. Influenced by Chinese schooling, I was required to memorise English words every day, sometimes even the whole text, since we did not have any access to other English materials. With this unique method, I studied English for six years, never exposed to oral English (speaking and listening). Fortunately, my memorisation of English words and grammar rules helped me achieve high scores in examinations. After I entered university, I started to learn how to listen to and to speak English. It was then that I first realised that English is very much a living language. As I used English on a daily basis, something of the culture of English speakers was subtly influencing me subconsciously. When I look back, I realise that access to the English language and culture reshaped my identity (work).

My English teaching career has led me to further ponder my identity. Since the 1980s, English as a foreign language has been regarded as a compulsory language course in China. One crucial mission of English teachers is to help students learn English words and grammar rules and then pass examinations. In order to achieve this, many English teachers assume that their primary role is to help learners write and translate using correct grammar. One of the purposes of Chinese language teaching and learning is to help students build up their Chinese national identity, mainly by the teaching of Chinese culture, since ‘identities are wholly social constructions and cannot “exist” outside of cultural representation. They are the consequences of acculturation’ (Barker 2008, 216). If the interaction between language learning and identity (work) does exist, it is undeniable that Chinese students’ identity is influenced by Chinese cultures and ideologies, largely transferred to them through Chinese language learning.

I also see that English language learning for Chinese students is a process of helping them construct a different identity, although this process of is often ignored due to many reasons such as the influence of ideology and patriotism in Chinese education practice. Without an awakening of a sense of their identity work, it is not possible for
these learners to learn English well, let alone obtain a different identity, especially when occurring in the context of English language teaching and learning in China.

This situation may be different for Chinese students learning and living in a different cultural and ideological space, for example, Australia. The different space offers a possibility for them to construct a new identity, since they have crossed the cultural boundary and entered a new cultural space. This situation may function as a cradle of a different identity. Chinese students may need to transfer their identity to integrate into their new community in Australia. They may frequently negotiate their identities in-between their home culture and host culture. Theoretically, the everyday life of Chinese students is a process of their identity work; their everyday life is supposed to be affected by their identity work. In this research project, my examination of Chinese students’ everyday life presents a good snapshot to explore their communication practices and identity work in a new cultural space.

My personal experiences in struggling to find an identity and in learning and teaching English have made me realise that identity work is often related to lived experiences and language acquisition, especially for those people dwelling in a strange culture. In the past few years, most English learners that I taught in China planned to study in Australia. Many of them are studying in Australia now, and some have finished their course. During this time, I have become interested in how they communicate with others and how they negotiate their identity in everyday practices. This has influenced my decision to write this research project in the context of Australia rather than in the context of China.

My ethnographic research and writing, whist living in the space of Australia, help my examination of the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students in Australia. As an international PhD student, in doing this research project I have experienced similar identity work to other Chinese students, and this enables me to have a better understanding of their everyday communication and identity work as an ethnographer. Undoubtedly, this particular perspective has added to the value of this ethnographic project.
PART ONE
INTRODUCTION

Part One consists of four chapters of this thesis. Chapter One discusses the research context, outlines the background of this project from social and cultural perspectives, analyses the internationalisation of higher education, and describes my personal experiences related to the theme of identity. The significance and objectives of this research project are also explored. They reveal my motives for undertaking this study, something I have held as a personal goal for the last few years. These experiences and motives help me define a set of relevant questions that, in turn, enables me to focus on the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students in Australia.

In Chapter Two, I review three interrelated and broad themes emerged in previous research into international students, including Chinese students. These themes are related to affective, rational and relational dimensions. They are linked to international students’ everyday life in a strange social and cultural space. Further, I discuss the possible outcomes of Chinese students’ identity work under the influence of their learning of English language. In this literature review, I not only analyse what other scholars have done but also point out some of the existing knowledge gaps that I wish to consider in this research project.

Chapter Three is focused on the theories that I adopted in this research project. Given that this research project aims to explore the communication practices and identity work in Chinese students’ everyday life, I first define the concept of everyday life. To me, everyday life is a social stage, on which everyone performs differently and similarly, influenced by their particular culture and ideology. Their identity work is constantly constructed in everyday practices. Given that this research project concerns the identity work of a group of Chinese people living in a new socio-cultural and linguistic space, other crucial concepts involved such as communication, culture, ideology, language, space, place, cultural identity and national identity are addressed in this chapter.

Chapter Four aims to describe how I conducted this research project. In order to capture the reality of the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students, I adopted institutional ethnography as a method of inquiry. In this chapter I argue for the application of institutional ethnography and describe the methods that were adopted to collect and analyse the data. I also discuss why Discourse becomes a key term utilised in the data analysis.

As an introduction to this research thesis, Part One provides relevant background information for my readers so that they understand the significance and the answers resulting from the primary questions: Who, When, Where, What, Why and How they relate to this research project. This part also lays a solid foundation for my data analysis and discussion which follows in Parts Two and Three.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction
Today education can raise people’s productivity and bring about a solid foundation for a rapid technological and economic development (Bloom 2004). The number of Chinese students enrolled in the world top universities of those developed countries, including Australia, has significantly increased in the past decades due to the importance of high-quality education. The popularity of English language learning and the successful operations of academic resources and cultural capital of those universities are some of the reasons why Chinese students choose them as their first destination for international study.

In Australia this situation prompts several questions. Have Australian universities, as international education institutions, provided high-quality educational services to their international students? Have they made sufficient policies and curriculum innovations to respond to the needs of international students, including cultural and linguistic challenges that they face in Australia? How do Chinese students perceive their own identity and experiences and those international educational services provided by their universities? How do their everyday life and identity work influence their academic learning and communication inside and outside university? An exploration of the everyday life of Chinese students may help us explore all these questions which relate to their identity work in a new social and cultural space.

In this chapter, I first discuss the context of this research project, which consists of three aspects – social and cultural context, educational context and my own personal experience. Next, I discuss the significance and objectives of this research project. I also articulate my research questions in this thesis. These questions concern about how Chinese students communicate with others and construct their identities in a host culture. Other questions related to the internationalisation of higher education are also raised and discussed in this thesis.

1.2. Statement of Research Context
1.2.1. Social and cultural context
Globalisation brings us an era of contraction of time and space, and it takes us into a ‘society of fluid modernity’ (Bauman 2000, 23) and a compressed quotidian everyday experiences (Davis 2008). This fluid society makes us feel that the world is becoming smaller than at any previous time. The compression of time and space also enables us to cross social and cultural borders and enter foreign spaces. ‘Entering a new culture highlights issues of identity and differences’ (Palfreyman 2007, 4), and hence it may bring identity crisis with it. For Chinese students living and learning in Australia, their identity may become a project that involves facing the differences in the new space.

In the past decade, international educational cooperation has boomed, leading to the growing number of international students in Western universities. Many countries, including China, have sponsored young scholars to study abroad (Chen and Huang 2013, Chen and Hu 2012). As a lingua franca, English language makes those English-speaking countries such as Britain, the United States and Australia become the first choice for international learners in these educational cooperation and exchanges. These English-speaking countries combined have successfully attracted thousands of
international students annually. The popularity of English language learning has also motivated more and more young students to leave their familiar cultural and social space and enter an English-speaking context. Such developments have provided conditions for the growth of international higher education.

Since 1978, significant social and economic changes have occurred in China with the government introducing a new ‘open door’ policy and entering a period of reform. This has enabled some Chinese to become wealthier and so cover the costs of their children receiving higher education overseas. The national policy of ‘openness’ has also resulted in some Chinese gradually becoming appreciative of the Western world and its high-quality educational practice. Partnerships between Chinese and foreign universities are actively welcomed by the authorities as a basis for the transfer of expertise in relation to both research and teaching (Ennew and Yang 2009, Onsman 2013). Some groups, for example, the newly arising middle-class, also encourage the authorities to invest more efforts in the development of international higher education. This is perceived by them as educational investment in human capital and a way of increasing the national economic performance (Moore 2004).

It is widely accepted that knowledge as a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu 2002) can empower people. Some Chinese parents choose to send their children abroad to receive high-quality higher education so that one day their children can obtain cultural capital as a competitive advantage. In this way, Chinese parents also expect that their own economic capital can be transformed into their children’s cultural capital. Here cultural capital also refers to certain ways of talking, dressing, behaving and socialising that are usually sanctioned by education institutions. These educational institutions are specific sites where students can learn the culture of the dominant society. Equally important, they can be particular places where students can develop critical awareness of differences between social status or class distinctions that actually exist in the larger society (Giroux 1988, Gee 1996). Of course, Chinese students are expected to acquire the local culture and even integrate into the society in their host country.

1.2.2. Educational context

Now ‘education, particularly in the developing world, has been closely tied to both power and identity’ (Swatuk 2005, 179). In China, influenced by Confucian tradition, education has long been valued and perceived as very important ‘not only for personal improvement but also for societal development’ (Lee 1996, 26). After students learn knowledge as their cultural capital, they are expected to “invest” their acquired skills and expertise and climb the ladder to better occupations’ (Apple 1982, 42). Another potential reason why Chinese parents send their children to study overseas is that international education has often been ‘a powerful incentive for immigration’ (Welch 2007, 131). Chinese students’ identity work and their transformation in a host country are often regarded as decisive factors, if they want to immigrate to some places like Australia after they finish their course.

Currently higher education institutions within China and overseas study agencies are advising Chinese students to pursue quality education in Australia and other countries. Australian education institutions are also seeking to cooperate with Chinese partners so as to enhance their share of the international education market. As a result, higher education in Australia has become ‘an education market, steered from the background
by government, in which students and parents were consumers, teachers and academics were producers, and educational administrators had become managers and entrepreneurs’ (Marginson 1997, 5). Although this statement is still controversial, and some scholars, for example, Healey (2008), suspect whether higher education is in really ‘internationalising’, it would seem that international students have become the products of an educational assembly line, whilst higher education has become a profitable business in Australia.

1.2.3. Personal experience as a context
In addition to the social, cultural and educational contexts, my research motivation as discussed in the Preface was connected to my identity awareness and my personal experience. I have been interested in this project in the field of international higher education since 2002, when I was working as an English lecturer in an international educational program that linked an Australian university with a Chinese university. This joint program helped Chinese students come to Australia to undertake a bachelor’s degree course. Since then, I have witnessed hundreds of Chinese students successfully completing their courses in Australia. Some of them however dropped out after staying in Australia for a couple of years. There are different reasons why each student is ‘unsuccessful’ in his/her academic life, and I do not wish to describe those students as ‘unsuccessful’. They should not be simply labeled this way, even when they have given up their study and returned to China. To outsiders, they are ‘unsuccessful’, since they did not get their degree; to me, some of them just made their own decision and returned to China to live in their familiar space. This led me to be interested in how the aspects of Chinese students’ everyday life affect their decision-making, their academic learning and their future trajectories.

When I first came to Melbourne in 2004, I have personally experienced difficulties as an outsider. I attempted to immerse myself in a totally different host culture, but I felt rather uncomfortable. This short and painful experience made me deeply aware of the lived experiences of Chinese students in Australia. I feel that in strange Australian settings their everyday communication must be ‘an event without a past’ and ‘an event without a future’ (Bauman 2000, 95). The strangeness can mean ‘our feeling of being lost, of not knowing how to act and what to expect, and the resulting unwillingness of engagement (Bauman 1993, 149). In this case, how Chinese students communicate with others and make their identity work is an interesting project to investigate, and it will contribute to the sector of Australian higher education.

1.3. Research Significance and Objectives
The everyday life of Chinese students in Australia remains a mystery to many Chinese parents and educators, since most of them have little understanding of international students’ life. The influence of the westernized mass media makes many Chinese simply assume that living in Australia must be enjoyable and very easy. However, given that ‘(social) space is a (social) product’ (Lefebvre 1991b, 26), the change of Chinese students’ social and cultural space makes their everyday life cross the boundary of cultural domain and move into a completely different space. Consequently, their everyday communication becomes difficult as a result of the change of social and cultural identity and communication context. In turn, their identity as ‘a stranger’ in the host culture can influence their everyday communication and academic learning. By observing and analysing their everyday life, this research project aims to explore how Chinese students exist/live and how they communicate
with others and as others in Australia.

Human space can be categorised into ‘lived’ space, ‘perceived’ space and ‘conceived’ space (Lefebvre 1991b, 38). When Chinese students move into their new space in Australia, their ‘lived space’ is often considered ‘as a simple combination or mixture of the “real” and the “imagined” in varying doses’ (Soja 1996, 10). It may be different from their ‘conceived’ space that they initially expected. This ‘lived’ space may also bring many unknowns into their ‘conceived’ space and ‘perceived’ space. Similarly, the ‘lived’ space of Chinese students may be different from the ‘conceived’ space imagined by their parents in China. An examination of Chinese students’ lived space in Australia in order to understand their everyday life and identity work is a significant part of this research project.

Undeniably, Chinese parents support their children to study in Australia and hope that they can graduate, find a job and in some cases even obtain Australian citizenship. To many parents, Australia is a ‘conceived’ space not a ‘perceived’ space, not to mention a ‘lived’ space. As a result, the most that many parents can do is to expect Australian educational institutions to provide high-quality education so that their children can fulfill their ambitions. However, whether Australian higher educational institutions have taken measures to meet the demands of their students is still unknown. Chinese students’ academic learning and everyday life in Australia require a more focused research so as to raise the awareness of Australian international education providers.

It is likely that a focus on the everyday life of Chinese students in an unfamiliar socio-cultural space can capture the complexity of what they are experiencing in Australia. By investigating the everyday life of a cohort of Chinese students, I planned to explore how they communicate with others, and how they negotiate and (re)construct their identities in a host culture. I also intended to explore how their everyday life and identity (work) can influence their academic learning and lived experiences. All these matters require a comprehensive observation and analysis of the social relationships between Chinese students and others in the lived context.

These unknowns are investigated through this ethnographic project. It is anticipated that such an examination can capture Chinese students’ lived experiences and also provide a nuanced representation of their everyday communication and identity work. Theoretically, the complexity of Chinese students’ everyday life is explored to verify some approaches discussed previously in the field of intercultural communication and identity. Practically, this research project aims to help those people involved in the internationalisation of higher education better understand the everyday life of Chinese students in Australia. Specifically, this ethnographic project speaks to Australian educational institutions, administrators and lecturers, Chinese parents and other people involved in international higher education.

1.4. Focus Research Questions
The everyday communication of Chinese students in Australia is supposed to be a process of their learning about others and a process of living in the Other world. Yet, ‘in a liquid modern setting of life, identities are perhaps the most common, most acute, most deeply felt and troublesome incarnations of ambivalence’ (Bauman 2004, 32). In Chinese students’ everyday communication, their identity as a shadow of self is attached to them, and it may even become contradictory in today’s liquid society.
The following questions will guide this research project:

(1) How does Chinese students’ identity (work) interact with their learning (inside and outside their university) in their everyday life?
(2) How do Chinese Confucian cultural patterns and other cultural practices influence Chinese students’ everyday communication and identity work in Australia?
(3) How do Chinese students communicate with others such as their university lecturers, administrative staff members and librarians, Australian students and other international students in their university life?
(4) How do Chinese students negotiate their identities in Australia? What are the possible forces involved in their identity negotiation?

In order to explicitly explore the research questions, by observing and discussing from social and cultural perspectives, I will focus on the everyday practices and identity work of Chinese students in their lived space throughout this research project.

1.5. Outline of This Thesis

In the chapters that follow, I have divided this research thesis into four parts so as to explore the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students.

Part One consists of four chapters. In Chapter One, I introduced the research contexts, including my own personal experience that impelled me to do this project related to Chinese students’ identity. I also formulated a set of research questions for this study. Chapter Two is focused on the literature review, in which I review the previous research work related to international students, including Chinese students, from their affective, relational and rational perspectives. I discuss Chinese students’ English language learning and their identity so as to avoid an essentialist’s paradigm. I analyse the existing gaps in the literature in order to lay a solid foundation for my examination of Chinese students’ everyday life. In Chapter Three, I present my theoretical framework. Starting by my explanation of what and why I choose the everyday life, I address the relevant forces involved in the everyday life of Chinese students such as culture, ideology, language, cultural identity and national identity. Next, I define communication as a way of being and a form of cultural practice. I also address the concept of identity, since it is not only produced in everyday life but is also a force that influences communication practices. Finally, I discuss the concepts of space and place, since identity work is always fulfilled in a particular space and place. In Chapter Four, I argue why I choose institutional ethnography as my inquiry mode. The processing of my data collection and analysis methods are introduced as well.

In Part Two, I explore Chinese students’ communication practices inside and outside their university. Part Two consists of three chapters. In Chapter Five, I consider Chinese students’ experiences when they enter their university, which include their impression of the first English class and the first professional class attended, and the associated challenges they face in academic learning. I am also concerned about their learning as a set of everyday events in their university. These academic learning issues include class communication, assignment writing, examinations and English learning and communication competence. In Chapter Six, given that one’s interpersonal communication is crucial for his/her identity work, I am concerned about Chinese students’ interpersonal communication with their lecturers, administrative staff
members, librarians, Australian students and other international students in university. Chapter Seven is focused on Chinese students’ everyday communication practices outside their university, where I discuss their religion, daily life, homestay, part-time work, communication with parents and e-communication. Such everyday practices outside their university also provide me with a window into Chinese students’ identity work.

In Part Three, I discuss Chinese students’ identity work based on their everyday communication. Structurally, Part Three consists of three chapters: Chinese students’ institutional identity in Chapter Eight; Chinese students’ cultural identity and national identity in Chapter Nine, and Chinese students’ identity negotiation in Chapter Ten. In Chapter Eight, I initially provide four representations of Chinese students’ institutional identity, and then discuss the portraits of Chinese students’ institutional identity from two perspectives. One is produced by their own description; the other is produced by themselves from the standpoint of their imagined ‘Others’. Secondly, I focus on Chinese students’ institutional identity development from two aspects: one is their sense of identity changes in themselves, whilst the other focuses on identity changes felt by Chinese students when they are communicating with other Chinese students and/or Chinese-Australians. In Chapter Nine, I discuss Chinese students’ cultural identity and national identity. The first section explores Chinese students’ sense of being marginalised in their university. The second section explores their sense of belonging. In the third section, I discuss Chinese students’ cultural identity through their experiences and responses to Chinese festivals and Australian festivals. The last section addresses Chinese students’ national identity and its influence upon their communication. Chapter Ten is a pivotal section of Part Three. To capture the details of Chinese students’ identity negotiation, I place their identity negotiation in an imagined but practical discourse about when they are going to finish their university course and make their decision – to go back to China or to stay in Australia. In order to capture the opposing but dialogic forces involved, I borrow Bakhtin’s terms ‘centripetal’ and ‘centrifugal’ in this discussion. Chinese students’ identity negotiation is a signal of the commencement of their hybrid identity work; otherwise, they may not have any desire to stay in Australia.

In Part Four, Chapter Eleven, I first respond to the research questions formulated in Chapter One, and draw the main findings in this research project. Next, I re-examine the significance of this study by contextualising this thesis in the field of globalisation of Australian higher education, and point out that such an institutional ethnography is an examination of Australian higher education from below and within. Chinese students’ identity work is a part of their achievements, and it continues no matter where they will be in the future. After this, I list the limitations of this study, and these are the directions for my further research. Finally, based on my reflection in doing this research project, I propose Bakhtin’s dialogism as pedagogy in the globalised English teaching and learning practice, and as a mode of teacher-student relationship in the globalised higher education practice.

1.6. Conclusion
In this chapter, I identified my identity work as part of research context of this project. I have personally experienced identity negotiation, and my identity work has also influenced this research. Chinese students’ identity work is expected to influence their learning in Australia. How their identity work interacts with learning in university,
including learning outside university, is still unknown. It is not clear whether Chinese students have any motivation to construct their new identity in Australia. It is not clear how Chinese students’ identity influences everyday communication with others on and outside their university campus, and those possible forces involved in communication and identity work are not clear as well. The answers to these questions are reflected in their everyday practices.

As international education consumers in Australian universities, if Chinese students can be regarded as higher education consumers, their everyday life is supposed to be not only a process of cultural and educational consumption but also a detailed representation of Australian international higher education practice. The emergence of Chinese students’ living and learning in Australia may have brought certain changes in them, at least more interactions with their self and others. Their identity work may accompany these changes and interactions in everyday life, similar my own negotiation between my rural and urban identities. The complexity and richness of their identity work is presumed to be reflected in everyday communication.

In Chapter Two, I provide a literature review of previous research work on international students, including Chinese students. This review largely covers three aspects of (Chinese) international students, that is, affective, relational and rational dimensions. I also discuss the possible identity outcomes of Chinese students’ identity construction influenced by their learning of English language. This literature review, on the one hand, provides me with a general sense of what has been done by other scholars in previous research practice; on the other hand, the gaps in the previous research are addressed, which helps focus the parameters of this study. This step also ensures that my project has the potential to add significant understandings to the existing body of research in this field.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction
In Chapter One, I presented the context, the significance and objectives of this project and my research questions formulated in this study. As I discussed before, today international students have established a significant presence in many universities with internationalisation policies and development strategies in the higher education sector of Western countries. In order to understand international students, scholars have already carried out considerable research from various perspectives such as intercultural adjustment, adaptation, acculturation and other issues related to international education. Of course, these problems for international students often vary due to the influence of their primary culture, individual personality, English proficiency and other relating factors.

There is an ever-growing volume of literature on Chinese students as many scholars are interested in the large number of international students from China, where the socio-cultural space and praxis are different from other international students. Some factors such as Chinese students’ English language, Confucian culture, learning style, living customs and learning models bring challenges for them to investigate. To date, the previous issues examined have already covered Chinese students’ cultural shock, acculturation, emotional responses and intercultural communication competence. These aspects mostly extend to Chinese students’ interpersonal communication, learning motivation, learning style, and plagiarism.

Recent research projects largely place importance on international students’ psychological changes and adaptation. Most scholars focus on international students’ psychological challenges and assimilation rather than the social and (inter)cultural field of communication practices in their everyday life. However, international students, as individuals living in a different socio-cultural space, should not be expected to just simply and passively adjust themselves in order to be assimilated. Similarly, the transformation of Chinese students, a cohort with particular ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu 1990, 53), influenced by their particular culture and ideology, should not be viewed as merely being confined to the parameters of psychological changes in the host culture. Instead, they need to integrate into the host culture, if they can, in which they are supposed to have their own lived practices.

In this chapter, I review some issues related to international students, of course including Chinese students. In order to represent these issues, I place them in three different dimensions: affective, relational and rational. By ‘affective’, I refer to the feelings and emotions of international students in their host culture. By ‘relational’, I refer to international students’ experiences and problems exposed in their intercultural communication. Some issues are related to how international students manage their relationship with others in a host culture. By ‘rational’, I refer mostly to academic studies of international students in a host context. I also discuss Chinese students’ identity construction under the influence of their learning of English language. By reviewing these previous research trends, my reflection and the existing gaps that I intend to address in this study are proposed and expected to shed light on the direction of this research project.
2.2. Affective Issues and International Students

Affective issues are significantly present in the lives of international students, and influence their life and academic learning in a host culture. One’s affect is social, as it constitutes an energy that can spread to others and influence one another. Affect is viewed as an energy that can encourage or discourage people in the course of action (Wissinger 2007). Affect can refer ‘equally to the body and mind’, and it can ‘involve both reason and passions’ (Hardt 2007, ix). In this section, I focus on two affective issues related to international students. One issue occurs at the early stage of living in a host culture, and it is often regarded as a form of cultural shock. The other issue concerns emotional responses to staying overseas.

2.2.1. Cultural shock as affect

Most international students usually remain in a host country for a few years and return to their home country. During their stay, cultural shock may occur. Cultural shock is often accompanied by a sense of anxiety, when one suddenly loses all his/her familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse (Furnham and Bochner 1986). In other words, cultural shock usually results in affective changes brought about by living in a strange or unfamiliar socio-cultural space. Many scholars (Furnham 2004, Klopf and McCroskey 2007, Lustig and Koester 2010, Ting-Toomey and Chung 2005, Zapf 1991) have explored the affective experiences in cultural shock, and the symptoms are also well documented. For instance, in a host country international students may not sleep well or sleep too much; they may feel depressed, give up their study and even go back to their home country; they may not concentrate on their study or lose interest in it, and have a strong sense of homesickness, finding it difficult to adapt to their new life.

Affective changes have been widely discussed in the literature. For example, Oberg (1960) describes the different feelings in cultural shock as a U-curve over a period as time moves forward. According to Oberg (1960), there are four basic stages in one’s affective reaction when experiencing cultural shock. The first stage is the honeymoon stage, during which the feeling is euphoria, enchantment, fascination and enthusiasm. The second one is a crisis stage, when a new arrival usually experiences some negative feelings such as inadequacy, frustration, anxiety, anger and even hostility. The third is a recovery period, and this stage usually includes crisis solutions. The last stage is an adjustment stage. At this time, the customs of the host country may be accepted, at least in part, as the new arrival starts to develop functional competence.

Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005) also explain affective changes in cultural shock using a three-stage model. According to them, the first stage of cultural shock is an optical or elation phase, and the second stage is a stressful phase. The third stage is a settling-in phase, and at this stage people gradually learn how to cooperate with the new environment. Similarly, Spencer-Oatley and Franklin (2009, 152) argue that cultural shock brings ‘psychological and physical changes’, and then one can experience diverse feelings such as a sense of loss and feelings of deprivation, in relation to friends, status, profession and possessions; experiencing feelings of helplessness and being unable to cope with the new environment; being irritated, angry about ‘foreign’ practices; having feelings of isolation or being rejected by members of the new culture, or one’s own rejection of them, leading to confusion in roles, values and self-identity.
These affective changes are still debated widely. For example, Kim (1988) argues that the four stages in cultural shock have not always been consistently observed in empirical research. Lustig and Koester (2010, 320) also point out that cultural shock, although it is initially regarded as plausible, is not able to account for the different experiences of all those ‘sojourners’. Here ‘sojourners’ can refer to ‘many types of travelers including students, trainees, technical assistants, tourists, businessmen, military personnel, missionaries, foreign service officers, professors, and others’ (Brein and David 1971, 215), and international students are of course included. Further, Brown and Holloway (2008, 33) investigate the initial stage of international students’ sojourn at a university in the South of England and note that, although such feelings are present, their initial stage is not characterised by ‘feelings of excitement, as suggested by the U-curve model (and its successors).’ Rather, these international students are more likely to be ‘overwhelmed by negative symptoms more commonly associated with cultural shock.’ There may be more affective impacts than first thought in a cultural shock experience.

If international students’ initial experiences in a new socio-cultural space are similar to what most sojourners in the literature experiences, it is likely that they may encounter these affective changes as well. Similarly, perhaps there are diverse affective responses when Chinese students confront their cultural shock in Australia. Such experiences may result in their depression, anxiety, anger, and hostility, and so on. However, how Chinese students perceive these affects in the early stage of living in Australia is still largely an unknown. It is to be highly expected that these affective influences will be reflected in Chinese students’ everyday communication and identity work, and they may include their academic learning as well. It is assumed that there is an ongoing interaction between Chinese culture and the Australian host culture, whenever there is an interaction between Chinese students and their host society. The constant interaction between the cultures may trigger and influence Chinese students’ identity work. Only by fully examining Chinese students experiencing cultural shock actually within two or more cultural contexts can we closely explore what may occur in their communication.

2.2.2. Emotions of international students

Emotions of international students are frequently discussed, when their affective domain issues are addressed (Sovic 2008, Volet and Ang 2012). Biologically, it is very common for human beings to have a tendency to express different emotions. Yet, how emotions are interpreted is culture-related (Beebe, Beebe, and Redmond 2008), since culture plays a crucial role in understanding emotions. When international students with different cultural backgrounds are located in a host country as ‘a vulnerable student population’ (Sherry, Thomas, and Chui 2010, 33) and ‘unaccompanied sojourners’ (Kuo and Roysircar 2006, 159), their emotions may influence their communication practices due to the change of social and cultural spaces. For example, Simpson and Tan (2009) investigate Chinese students attending courses at a New Zealand institution and find that friendliness and a sense of safety on campus are main contributing elements in evaluation of their overseas study.

When international students are communicating with others in an unfamiliar context, their emotional responses are challenged. For instance, it is reported that the lack of ability and sensitivity to empathise with feelings, thoughts and behaviour of people from Western cultural backgrounds often leads to Chinese students feeling that they
lack social support (Best, Hajzler, and Henderson 2007). Such a situation means that they may have difficulty in social contacts such as finding non-Chinese friends (Long et al. 2009, Barron, Baum, and Conway 2007, Gu and Maley 2008, Gareis 2012), when they are living in a host country. Given these circumstances, Chinese students may often live within a closed circle of fellow Chinese friends and do not move freely outside in the mainstream culture. Such isolation can trigger complex emotional ambivalences about their previous place. Also, there may be an emotional turbulence, affecting their everyday communication.

International students with a non-Western background, including Chinese students, encounter poor relationships with other international students, the local students and lecturers and lack academic integration and social integration (Rienties et al. 2012) in their host country. Those students from Asian cultures, facing academic pressure and high expectations from their families, may feel stressed, anxious, depressed, lonely, unsafe and even guilty, especially when they have to overcome their cultural shock. The anxiety suffered by international students in their initial stage cannot be underestimated, and appropriate support systems must be put in place to alleviate their distress (Brown 2008). It is predictable that all these emotional changes may influence their communication practices and identity work in a host context.

In this study, Chinese students’ emotions are supposed to be related to their identity work in Australia. Greater details about Chinese students’ emotions are worthy of being explored. It is not well understood how Chinese students manage their emotions in everyday life and identity work. When they experience various issues in their lives overseas, whether/how Chinese students communicate their emotions to others is also a puzzle. Chinese students’ emotions need to be considered as a crucial part of Australian international ‘edubusiness’ (Luke 2010, 6) in order for them to have satisfying lives and learning experiences in their host universities.

2.3. Relational Issues and International Students
In this section, I firstly discuss Kim’s (1988) model to see how international students’ communication is reflected in it. Secondly, I address an acculturation curve to see how it is connected to the communication of international students, including Chinese students. Finally, I focus on intercultural communication competence to see how it can be developed so as to help international students’ communication in Australia.

2.3.1. Kim’s model and international students’ communication
It is feasible that international students’ internal and external equilibrium, which is normally assumed as balanced when living in their own familiar social and cultural context, will be destabilized, when they encounter psychological stress and difficulties in a host country. It is also assumed that international students instinctively may attempt to seek a new balance in their host culture.

Based on internal stress and a changing external environment, Kim (2001, 1988) proposes a stress-adaptation-growth dynamics model to explain one’s adaptation in a host culture. Kim’s model accommodates variations in the quality of communication and adaptation over time. As time moves on, one’s adaptation will improve, and the level of stress will also lessen in a host country. Over a prolonged period, when one gradually goes through a progression of internal change in a host country, ‘the function of stress and adaptation are likely to become less intense or severe’ (Kim
Finally, there will be an experience of an overall calming of his/her emotional levels.

Some modification of the model was suggested by Kim (1988) to accommodate the different responses of individuals over time. Kim (1988, 163) argues that in reality ‘everyone adapts, but at a different rate’. Not everyone is able to endure such a stressful transformation. Kim (1988) explains that one may not be able to undergo these adaptive changes identified; alternatively, one may be unwilling to experience the changes in his/her life. In the long run, the possible outcome is that some people strongly resist these changes, and some are not able to cope with their intense stress because of their psychological resilience.

Kim’s stress-adaptation-growth dynamics model looks like an evolution and provides us with a general picture of one’s stress changes and transformations in a new cultural context. Yet, the details in seeking the internal equilibrium are overlooked. In other words, this model simplifies an individual’s complex transformation process; the roles of social and cultural elements involved are not addressed as well.

In this research project, Chinese students may experience cyclical changes of the kind that Kim (1988) described, and I am interested in the details of such experiences in their everyday life. For instance, it may be of interest to know how Chinese students perceive themselves and others at different stages of such a cycle, and what factors may influence their identity work when facing emotional ups and downs. Also, the internal and external impetuses that push Chinese students to negotiate their identity will be explored by an examination of everyday practices in Australia.

2.3.2. The acculturation curve and international students

Acculturation is another research focus of the experiences of international students in a host culture. Simply, acculturation is a process of ‘learning and acquiring the elements of the host culture’ (Kim 1988, 53). It is a process for people to learn how to survive in a new culture through the acquisition of specific language, values, social norms, and diverse meaning that constitute a way of life (Barker 2008). When it comes to intercultural acculturation, Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005) define it from the perspective of identity and point out that acculturation is related to the degree of identity change that occurs when individuals move from a familiar environment to an unfamiliar one. In other words, acculturation is a process in which people acquire new cultural identity by communicating and living in a host culture.

Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) propose an acculturation curve to describe the feeling shifts in foreign communication over time. According to them, in the first period of acculturation, people often experience a stage of euphoria. After that, they experience cultural shock and some negative feelings. The third stage is an acculturation process, in which sojourners gradually learn how to function in the new culture and then try to integrate into the local society. The fourth stage is a stable stage of their feelings, at which sojourners get used to their host culture. They further describe three possible outcomes at the fourth stage of acculturation: (1) visitors continue to feel alien and discriminated against; (2) visitors consider themselves as being bicultural; and (3) visitors become ‘more Roman than the Romans.’ It is imagined that in the end people living in a host culture may refuse a new identity, obtain a new identity and/or live in-between two or more different cultures, or even achieve a stronger sense of their new
This acculturation curve provides us with these possible acculturation outcomes and the changes of visitors’ feelings in a host context. Based on this acculturation curve, it is predicted that the acculturation of Chinese students is full of changes at different stages in their host culture. They may simply give up their cultural adaptation and just live in their ethnic community; they may keep their primary identity, if they cannot be acculturated in a host culture. Another possibility is that they may achieve a hybrid identity after they stay for a couple of years in the host culture.

Yet, this acculturation curve is simplistic and over-generalized, since it ignores the complexity of an individual’s transformation process. As sojourners living in a host country, international students’ identity work is a major concern in their acculturation. It is reported that some Chinese international students have their ‘changing intentions’ (Hazen and Alberts 2006) to adapt themselves to their host country. However, there is another possibility that some international students may keep ethnic identity so as to achieve certain benefits and privileges. For example, some Arabic-speaking youth in South-Western Sydney would like to construct their identity between strategic essentialism and a strategic hybridity (Noble, Poynting, and Tabar 1999). Strategic essentialism, which even Spivak herself disputes, is a path that has been and continues to be explored as a minority strategy for influencing mainstream society (Eide 2010). It is used by nationalities, ethnic groups or minority groups to present themselves to the Others. Although many differences may still exist between members of these groups, and amongst themselves, it is advantageous to temporarily ‘essentialise’ themselves and produce their own group identity in a simplified way so as to achieve certain goals.

This reminds me that maybe Chinese students’ acculturation and their identity work in Australia is not what many people have anticipated. In other words, Chinese students may resist cultural changes and intentionally keep their ethnic identity. This makes the process of Chinese students’ acculturation, communication practices and their identity work more complex than the curve proposed by Hofstede and Hofstede (2005). It is therefore important to think about Chinese students’ acculturation and identity work as full of contradictions and tensions within their selves and between self and others. Their acculturation involves their struggles for both keeping their home culture alive and acquiring a new culture. Depending on the outcomes of such struggles, some Chinese students may ‘become more Roman than the Romans’; some may end up living and communicating predominantly within the boundaries of Chinese diaspora.

In this research project, the possible forces involved in Chinese students’ acculturation are worthy of a close examination. I am concerned about what forces are likely to be involved in their acculturation and how they construct their identity in acculturation. According to Scollon and Scollon (2001), acculturation refers to those intercultural situations in which two different cultural or social groups start to interact. Given that one group is stronger than the other, it can heavily influence the second group so that the second group may abandon some cultural practices and start practicing the culture of the first group. The outcome is that the less powerful group will eventually carry out the enforced culture learning. If their statement is true, I am interested in how Chinese students’ home culture influences their acculturation in Australia. Whether Chinese students will/can really give up their home culture in the process of
acculturation is also unknown to me yet. In this research project, an observation of Chinese students’ everyday communication and their identity work is expected to offer more insights into their acculturation in Australia.

2.3.3. Intercultural communication competence and international students

Intercultural competence is ‘the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people, who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavior orientations to the world’ (Spitzberg and Changnon 2009, 7). Generally, an individual’s knowledge, motivation and skills are the essential components of intercultural communication competence (Ting-Toomey 1999). One’s intercultural communication competence is perceived as an ability to manage his/her communication practices with others with a different cultural background. Without this ability, one often encounters difficulties even with a good command of English as the medium of intercultural communication. Those international students ‘from Asian countries had more difficulty adjusting to campus life than international students from non-Asian countries’ (Abe, Talbot, and Gellhoed 1998, 539), and their intercultural communication competence plays an important role in transition process.

Research into international students’ intercultural communication competence has covered many issues such as English learning and teaching, adaptation and academic learning in a host culture (Moloney and Harbon 2008, Wiseman 1993, Zimmermann 1995, Marr 2005, Shi 2006, Earl and Cong 2011, Holmes 2006). Intercultural communication competence is of great importance for international students, since it enables them to adapt to the host context. Such competence is also necessary for those people involved in international education practice (Simpson and Tan 2009, Song and Cadman 2013, Skinner and Abbott 2013, Bodycott 2012, Campbell and Li 2008). Therefore, many staff ‘request training in cross cultural teaching, with the idea that being culturally aware will help teaching’ (Harryba et al. 2012, 30). Paige and Goode (2009, 346) also recommend that educational professionals should be provided with ‘knowledge of intercultural concepts and theory’ to ensure that international education can be better managed. Practically, ‘proper staffing must be considered’ (Tuleja 2008, 333) in developing students’ intercultural awareness so that the staff members can instruct and guide international students effectively. If educators are not familiar with international students’ educational and cultural background, they can be misunderstood as ‘possessing only passive academic skills and even having learning difficulties’ (Choi and Nieminen 2013, 170), which may result in low expectations by educators.

In a host cultural context, intercultural communication competence is crucial for international students to function successfully (Skyrme 2007, Campbell 2012). The intercultural dimension needs to be integrated throughout international students’ learning process, ‘from pre-departure orientation through reentry and beyond, both for domestic studying abroad as well as for international students studying in a host country’ (Paige and Goode 2009, 346). This statement reveals to us the importance of intercultural communication competence for international students; it also captures the ongoing nature of its development.

To understand Chinese students’ communication practices, it would be useful to find out what difficulties they have and how they solve these problems in communication practices. In this research project, some issues related to Chinese students’
intercultural communication competence are to be investigated. For example, how Chinese students communicate with others as ‘strangers’ in their everyday life is to be closely examined. My observation of Chinese students’ everyday communication is also supposed to help me examine their intercultural communication competence, including the interaction of their intercultural communication competence and identity work.

2.4. Rational Issues and International Students
Here I use ‘rational issues’ to refer to international students’ academic learning issues during their stay overseas. In this section, I introduce the previous literature related to international students’ academic learning, including Chinese students’ academic learning. The issues related to their English learning and teacher-student relationship are addressed as well.

2.4.1. Learning style, plagiarism and international students
Chinese students normally come from different parts of China with diverse cultural backgrounds in a host country, and their expectations of studying usually vary greatly. Yet, they are often labeled as Chinese students and even stereotyped as ‘Others’ in Western universities due to Confucian heritage culture (Grimshaw 2007, Ryan 2012, Stephens 1997). There is a commonly held stereotype that Chinese students are reluctant to participate in classroom interaction, and they prefer to learn passively due to the influence of Chinese culture of learning (Shi 2006, Bloch 2007, Tran 2013). As a result, Chinese learners (indeed Asian learners in general) are frequently thought to be passive and reluctant to speak in the classroom (Littlewood 2009). Rote learning is also one of the learning characteristics of Chinese students, and they often learn in a passive style, taking direct instruction from teachers without asking questions.

There are social and cultural reasons involved in these learning modes, since there are ‘different educational philosophies between West and East’ (Chuang 2012, 479). Many students from East Asia such as China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan study in educational systems influenced by Confucian ideals (Kneebone 2007, Witte, Sequeira, and Fonteyne 2003). These students assume that their teacher is a representative of knowledge and authority, and he/she then becomes the centre of classroom learning. However, not all researchers agree with these stereotypes. Littlewood (2000, 33) argues that the stereotype of Asian students as ‘obedient listeners’ does not reflect the role that these students would like to play. Indeed some Asian students also prefer a more student-centered style of learning and teaching (Wong 2004). The notion that they act as listeners does not mean that they do not have their opinions in academic learning.

Apart from lack of response in class communication, there is controversy regarding Chinese students’ critical ability in their academic learning. Influenced by Confucian thought, some Chinese students and scholars ‘spend their life parroting whatever their teachers had taught them’ (Bo 1992, 27), and they become uncreative, unimaginative and are often incapable of making critical judgments. Some Malaysian students also think that ‘becoming critical’ is against their culture received in the home country (Robinson-Pant 2009). However, some Chinese students are critical of education in China and note that Chinese higher education lacks provision in the areas of diverse thinking perspectives, independent learning opportunities and helping students develop capacity for problem-solving (Gill 2007). In the long term, Chinese students
lose opportunities to practice and improve their creative thinking capability, and this leads to their unwillingness to work creatively in academic learning.

Plagiarism is another problem in international students’ written communication. In the Western academic context, plagiarism is generally understood as ‘borrowing the words and ideas of others and using them in one’s writing or other work without acknowledging the original source’ (Handa and Power 2005, 66). Yet, plagiarism is a controversial issue; not everyone would agree on its definition, nor its application in particular circumstances (Wyburn 2009). For example, Ireland and English (2011, 170) argue that to allow students ‘to write, possibly plagiarise and experience their own feedback and that of others might be the most appropriate starting point’ in writing practice.

In this research project, I will try to explore the possible reasons for Chinese students’ tendency to be silent during classroom instruction. My research will also examine the nature of Chinese students’ plagiarism, if indeed it exists among Chinese students. Some academic learning issues, such as Chinese learning culture, Chinese students’ critical ability, the influences of English proficiency upon their academic learning, are to be investigated as well.

2.4.2. English proficiency and teacher-student relationships

Without a good command of English language, international students’ communication faces challenges in an English-speaking host country (Sayers and Franklin 2008, Zhou and Todman 2009, Maher and Mitchell 2010, Barron, Baum, and Conway 2007, Yates and Wahid 2013, Lee, Farruggia, and Brown 2013, Zhang and Mi 2010). For instance, Holmes (2005) investigates Chinese students’ communication practices in New Zealand and notes that some students’ lack of confidence in English proficiency and their inadequate English communication experiences have negatively influenced the development of their intercultural competence and communication opportunities with others. Yet, the relationship between students’ identities, English proficiency and communication patterns hasn’t been explored. This relationship becomes one of the central concerns in this research project, focusing on the everyday practices of
international students from China.

The area of rational issues concerns the relationship between international students and lecturers in a host country. The support of host academic staff is regarded as most important in enabling international students to overcome their initial challenges (Gill 2007). There are several studies that are focused on the relationship between Chinese students and their lecturers/supervisors (Chang and Strauss 2010, Harryba, Guilfoyle, and Knight 2013, Zhang, Zhang, and Castelluccio 2011, Cadman 2000). For instance, Chinese students are found to have displayed ‘a high level of concern with the academic and professional credentials of their lecturers’ (Simpson and Tan 2009, 19); Chinese students usually ‘respect the supervisor by not disagreeing with anything so as to give the supervisor face’ (Ingleby and Chung 2009, 48); Chinese students expect ‘a hierarchic distance but a professional closeness’ with lecturers (Edwards and Ran 2009, 193). These outcomes reveal that Chinese culture influences Chinese students’ communication practices with their lecturers/supervisors in their host country.

There is likely to be diverse communication patterns between Chinese students and their university staff members, the local students and other international students. International students’ identity work is likely to be influenced by their communication practices with others, since ‘we perceive the world through the time/space of the self and through the time/space of the other’ (Holquist 2002, 35). It is reasonable to imagine that perhaps there exist a form of dialogic relationships between Chinese students and lecturers and, consequently, more details are needed about how Chinese culture patterns influence their communication practices with others.

2.5. English Learning and Identity

Language is always related to identity, as language is the ‘most salient way we have of establishing and advertising our social identities’ (Lippi-Green 1997, 5). The learning of English language is perceived as a process of identity construction in a social-cultural context (Norton 2006, Norton and McKinney 2011, Norton and Gao 2008, Miller 1999, Hoffman 1996, Block 2007a, Ha 2007). Norton (1997) uses her term ‘investment’ to signal the socially and historically constructed relationship of English learners to the target language and their ambivalent desire to learn and practice it. Norton (1997, 411) explains that this investment in the target language learning is ‘an investment in a learner’s own social identity, which changes across time and space.’ Hence, English learning is related to identity construction, especially when people are facing the change of space and time. One’s investment in English learning is an investment in his/her identity construction by taking ownership of English language.

English learning is a process of helping English learners to set up an ‘imagined community’ (Pavlenko and Norton 2007, Pavlenko 2003) and also construct their new ‘imagined identities’ (Norton 2010). In such an imagined community, the traditional concept that English language learning is just a memorization of words and grammar rules is abolished; instead, learners are actively engaged in communication practices by which they construct their new social and cultural identities. In other words, these learners cannot be just regarded as having ‘a unitary, fixed and ahistorical “personality”’ (Norton and Gao 2008, 110). Instead, in their imagined communities, they are assumed to communicate with others, through which they are able to construct their new social and cultural identities.
Yet, one’s identity construction in an imagined community is not a straightforward process, since language is always related to culture and ideology. As a result, English learners may frequently confront a paradox of intercultural communication in their imagined communities, not to mention in their authentic communication practices, especially when they are living in an English-speaking context, where the norms, values and ideologies and so on are all different from the dominant English-speaking ones. The non-native learners may often experience these dilemmas and respond to them differently. Nevertheless, native speakers or those who reside in a host nation can stereotype these learners and their experiences.

Given the complex interrelation of culture, national ideology and language, English teaching and learning practice in Asian countries, including other non-English speaking countries, is often characterised by a struggle in meaning-making. The differences of cultures, values and social norms may lead to this struggle as well. This struggle may further trigger the negotiation of meanings and identities by English language teachers and learners. However, practically it is really difficult to find an appropriate pedagogy that would allow English learners either to conform to Western social norms or create their own context of use based on the values that they have appropriated in their national or institutional culture (Kramsch and Sullivan 1996). The context of English teaching and learning, especially when conducted as a foreign language, is often influenced by the home culture, which is usually labeled as ‘fixed and objective’ (Kubota 1999, 16).

Indeed some researchers have focused on the consequences of English learning from the perspective of identity, and they hold the opinion that English learning, even when it is conducted at those home sites, is still likely to trigger the learners’ identity work. According to Gu (2010), English learners in China are found to have interacted within the specific learning community, the surrounding social environment and their imagined global community, which results in their different identities in home social and cultural discourse. Grimshaw (2007, 303) also argues that it is inappropriate to stereotype Chinese students as ‘passive, uncritical and over-reliant on the instructor’; instead, they are complex subjects and their identity work may be ‘moderated by membership of the various cultures’. These research outcomes are evidences to support Norton’s ‘imagined community’ and its influence on English learners’ identity construction. As a result, it can be concluded that one’s learning of English language is likely to help re-shape social and cultural identities, even in a home context.

Another point I should point out is that English writing, as a part of English language learning, can influence English learners’ identity (Ha 2009b, Ivanič 1998, Miller 2007). One’s voice, as a representation of his/her identity, can be represented in the process of his/her English writing. That is, there is a process of identity construction in English learners’ writing process; in return, it helps English learners re-evaluate themselves and re-construct their identities, which is like Ha (2008, xi), a Vietnam-Australian scholar, notes that English writing ‘has shaped my identity as much as my identity has shaped what and how I have written’. As such, it can be predicted that international students, of course including Chinese students in Australia, may re-construct their identity in the process of English learning and writing.

Perhaps such a prediction is not appropriate due to international students’ strategic
essentialism that I have mentioned before. Yet, international students’ identity work is likely to be affected by their English learning and communication practices, no matter whether they are located in a home or in a host cultural-linguistic context. International students, including Chinese students, thus may face ‘discursive identity construction’ (Clark and Gieve 2006), even when/if they are Othered in a host context. Probably international students’ identity work is full of ‘discursive struggle and transculturation in which hybrid identities are negotiated and contradictory subjectivities are produced’ (Grimshaw 2010, 243), when staying in a host country.

It is easy to essentialise Chinese students’ identity, although they may (re)construct their identities via their English learning. Before Chinese students leave for Australia, they have lived in their particular society dominated by Chinese cultural patterns such as Confucianism, although today’s China is more open, leading to some cultural differences. Yet, influenced by their family, parents and day-to-day education practice, Chinese students no doubt have already subconsciously internalized their primary discourses and acquired particular cultural and national identities. In other words, Chinese students are affected by representations of Chinese identity, just like I have internalized a rural identity since my early childhood.

However, when I am discussing the relationship between English language learning and identity work, I am not quite sure whether or how Chinese students have really attained their new socio-cultural identity in their imagined communities via English language leaning. Although some scholars have discussed the possibility of identity transformation in the course of English learning, some caution should be taken while considering the effects of the examination-oriented teaching model and rote learning on them in today’s Chinese educational context. Optimistically, nevertheless, I still imagine that some of them may experience intense identity negotiation in the process of English learning, just like my own experience of negotiation between the rural and the urban identity. These students, when located in Australia as English learners, may even experience more intense identity work.

Under the influences of English learning and home culture, confronting the dilemma of identity work, it should be supported that ‘Asian international students need to be seen as individuals in terms of who they are, who they want to be and who they could become’ (Ha 2009a, 212). Their diversified identities may be produced in complex, dynamic and sophisticated ways. Such an anti-essentialist point of view reminds me that it is highly possible that everyday life is full of contested sites for international students, including Chinese students, to carry out constant struggles in their identity construction.

In this research project, my focus on Chinese students’ everyday communication is informed by a perspective that would enable me to observe Chinese students and their identity (re)construction from below and within everyday practices in Australia. Here my discussion, on the one hand, is to avoid the previous stereotypes of Chinese students produced under the influence of essentialism; on the other hand, it is to acknowledge the influence of Chinese students’ learning of English language as a part of their identity work. I also attempt to capture these contradictions in Chinese students’ everyday communication and identity work in Australia and, in particular, to identify the possible forces involved in this process.
2.6. Conclusion
In this chapter, I have reviewed literature that deals with the affective, relational and rational dimensions of international students’ learning and living in host countries. I have also discussed the possible outcomes of Chinese students’ identity work under the influence of English language learning so as to avoid an essentialist’s paradigm. It is impossible and impractical to cover all those issues that scholars have previously investigated. However, all the issues presented as the affective, relational and rational dimensions of international students’ lived experiences have already provided me with a reference upon which I am able to define the scope of my own research.

The three dimensions reviewed are closely interrelated, since ‘affects can be actions, that is, determined by internal causes, or the passions, determined by the external causes’ (Hardt 2007, x). In this research project, when examining Chinese students’ affective dimension, we need to see how these issues influence their relational and rational dimensions. When examining Chinese students’ rational dimension, we should never overlook their affective and relational dimensions. Their rational dimension interacts with their affective and relational dimensions as well. This triangle of affective, rational and relational dimensions provides me with a lens through which I can examine the everyday life of Chinese students.

It is not difficult to see that much of the research discussed in literature review has not looked closely enough at Chinese students’ identity work in a host context. Identity of Chinese students is a central focus of their communication practices, since it is constructed in their everyday life. In other words, Chinese students’ communication practices influence their identity work; conversely, their identity work influences their everyday communication as well. Specifically, these affective, rational and relational dimensions in everyday life are connected to the identity work of students in Australia and deserve more detailed investigation.

In the next chapter, I address the theoretical framework of this research project. Given that this project is largely focused on Chinese students’ everyday communication and identity work, all the theories discussed are related to the concept of everyday life. These theories start from everyday life to a detailed discussion of identity. I also discuss relevant concepts such as culture, ideology and language, since they are the forces involved in Chinese students’ everyday life in Australia. Cultural identity and national identity are discussed as well, since they are expected to influence Chinese students’ communication practices in Australia. Next, I discuss Bakhtin’s definition of communication. That is, one’s communication as a form of being exists ubiquitously in everyday life. One’s communication practices are always conducted in a certain space and place; therefore, the concepts of space and place are also examined in the following chapter.
CHAPTER THREE
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Introduction
In Chapter Two, I reviewed the previous research related to international students, including Chinese students, from the affective, relational and rational perspectives. The three dimensions interact and mutually exert influences on each other. I discussed the possible outcomes of Chinese students’ identity work under the influence of their learning of English language. Chinese students are likely to construct new identities; yet, it is also possible that they keep their identity under strategic essentialism in their host country.

In this research project, it is necessary to set up an umbrella conceptual framework which covers these issues related to Chinese students in their host country. To enable me to fully explore Chinese students’ communication practices and identity work, I choose to carry out this project from the perspective of everyday life. Hopefully, by capturing Chinese students’ everyday life, I can provide a platform so as to uncover the relationship between everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students in Australia.

What is everyday life then? What are the forces that influence the everyday life? How does one’s identity work evolve in everyday life? These questions are explored in this chapter. The purpose of my theoretical discussion is not only to examine the concepts related to everyday life but also to lay a solid foundation for my forthcoming data collection and discussion. Theory is ‘a set of interrelated abstract propositions about human affairs and the social world that explain their regularities and properties’ (Brewer 2000, 192), and I need to outline how these theories are interrelated with the notion of everyday life, and how they are utilised in this research project.

In this chapter, the nature of everyday life is discussed. I then explain the significance and the dynamics of everyday life and argue that everyday life is not only full of repetitions but also changes. I understand that everyday life in essence is a form of social practices by people with different cultural backgrounds. Further, I argue that identity plays a crucial role in everyday life; cultural identity and national identity are discussed as well, since they are supposed to influence the everyday life subconsciously. I also address concepts such as culture, ideology and language since they all play important roles in everyday life. The concepts of place and place are discussed as well, since they are connected to communication and identity; everyday practices are always conducted in spaces and places.

3.2. Theorising Everyday Life
3.2.1. Why is everyday life significant?
People are likely to neglect everyday life, since ‘the everyday is beneath our attention’ (Sheringham 2006, 22) and it is concerned about ‘what is left over’ (Lefebvre 1991a, 97). However, everyday life is a significant notion in social science. To evoke everyday life is a way to call people to pay more attention to the quotidian lives that have been left out of historical accounts and that have been often put aside due to too much concern about those events brought by the so-called cultural elites (Highmore 2002b). In this sense, the concern about everyday life drives scholars back to those ordinary people and their ordinary stories.
With regard to the significance of research into everyday life, it is accepted that ‘to advance a theory of everyday life is to elevate lived experience to the status of a critical concept – not merely in order to describe lived experience, but in order to change it’ (Kaplan and Ross 1990, 77). The purpose of making the everyday world our problematic is to remind us to ‘look for the “inner” organization generating its ordinary features, its orders and disorders, its contingencies and conditions, and to look for that inner organization in the externalized and abstracted relations of economic processes and of the ruling apparatus in general’ (Smith 1987, 99).

To examine everyday life is to examine those potential rules, routines and regularities in the behaviour observed, and these provide us with clues to understand how the settings are socially organised (Scott 2009). Observing everyday life needs to go beyond the surface of the immediately observed. By this way, researchers can dig deeper so as to identify the meanings hidden behind it.

3.2.2. Repetitions and changes in everyday life
For most people, everyday life is regular and repetitious. Highmore (2002a, 5) uses ‘boredom’ and ‘the assembly line’ to situate everyday life in modernity with its uniformity, dullness and so on. Yet, everyday life is not just simple repetitions. The days follow one after another and resemble one another; however, the contradiction often lies at the heart of everydayness (Lefebvre 1987). Lefebvre (2004, 90) used rhythms to describe everyday life, since ‘rhythms imply repetitions and can be defined as movements and differences within repetition … but there is no identical absolute repetition, indefinitely.’ Everyday life is not ‘something that is static, but a dynamic and changing site’ (Pink 2012, 28).

Everyday life is a ‘phantasmagoria’ (Highmore 2002a, 14), and it is rich and diverse. Also, it is mysterious, and it is regarded as the home of the bizarre due to the ‘strangeness at the heart of the everyday’ (Highmore 2002a, 12). Very often everyday life ‘offers itself up as a problem, a contradiction, a paradox: ordinary and extraordinary, self-evident and opaque, known and unknown, obvious and enigmatic’ (Highmore 2002a, 16), not as boring and mundane as most people have imagined it before.

Everyday life is a social stage, and everyone performs similarly and differently on this stage, influenced by their particular culture, ideology and other forces. It is a mirror, in which social activities are represented in details. To invoke everyday life is an approach to make the invisible visible (Highmore 2002b). Everyday life is a perspective to examine diverse aspects of life that lie underneath. It is also a window through which we can observe those common things around us; yet, sometimes they are not merely common.

3.2.3. Everyday life as cultural practices
‘Culture is ordinary: that is the first fact’ (Williams 2002, 93). The ordinariness of culture implies that everyday life in essence is a form of cultural practices. Culture is embedded in the life of ordinary people; it is represented by the everyday life of ordinary people. Everyday life is usually considered to be a collective culture, since it is influenced by those norms of a particular society. Culture influences everyone’s social practices and is appropriated by them in different social sites, and this produces
the diversity of culture.

An individual’s everyday life is different from another person’s, and thus everyday life is ‘in certain senses unique’ (Inglis 2005, 2). It is common that one person’s ordinary is another person’s extraordinary. As such, the ordinary is not fixed and set in stone. Rather, it is always changing, since ordinariness is a process (like habits and dispositions) where those things such as practices, feelings, conditions and so on can gradually change from unusual to usual, from irregular to regular, and finally they can move to the other way and become a normal part, and then nobody will feel uncommon. That is, there is a state of being ordinary and an ongoing process of becoming ordinary in everyday life (Highmore 2011). The process of becoming ordinary is by and large unnoticeable.

In this research project, the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students are selected as two major themes of their ‘everyday events’ (Inglis 2005, 17) in Australia. It can be assumed that the everyday life of Chinese students is full of mysteries and strangeness, although it appears to be boring and repetitious. However, it is meaningful to uncover the hidden features of Chinese students’ everyday life. In doing so, it is envisaged that the strangeness in Chinese students’ everyday life will also be unveiled.

3.3. Identity and Everyday Life

Identity is an important concept for human beings, and indeed ‘all human behavior is ultimately motivated by the need to maintain one’s identity’ (Bracher 2009, 24). Bauman (2004, 29) argues that longing for identity actually comes from ‘the desire of security’ in everyday life. Identity is defined as ‘our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people’s understanding of themselves and of others’ (Jenkins 2004, 5). Identity is concerned with ‘the sameness and difference, with the personal and social as understood through forms of representation’ (Barker 2008, 216). Examining identity makes us feel that we are similar but also different from one another.

Identity is best understood ‘as an emotionally charged discursive description of ourselves that is subject to change’ (Barker 2008, 216), since it is ‘never either pure or fixed but formed at the intersections of age, class, gender, race and nation’ (Barker 2008, 260). Identity is ‘always fragmented, never integrated, never fixed, and always being remade’ (Schwandt 2001, 122), and it is in the state of becoming. Identity is ‘constructed, multiple and dynamic’ (Ha 2007, 21), and ‘committing oneself to a single identity for life, or even for less than a whole life but for a very long time to come, is a risky business’ (Bauman 2004, 89).

Identity is a social concept and it is influenced by particular space. One’s identity is continually interpreted and reinterpreted in a particular social and cultural context (Lawler 2008), and it also varies as one gains new roles or leaves behind old ones in everyday practices. If one’s social and cultural context changes, identity is likely to change, although sometimes he/she may keep ethnic identity intentionally. If one’s new identity is not achieved with the change of space and place, identity clashes may occur. As a result, one may feel out of place, since the external settings have altered whereas his/her internal self still remains the same.
Identity work is usually embedded in one’s education process. Education can mediate between a society and an individual self, and it is a process whereby those dominant social and cultural discourses gradually become a part of one’s consciousness or inner self. It is often a subconscious process in which the social comes to be inscribed within the individual. This process of socialization through one’s education practice provides a framework and conditions for the individual and his/her personal self (Moore 2004). Therefore, one’s identity usually needs to be negotiated and even remade, if his/her educational context changes.

In addition to the process of education, identity is linked to culture and language; culture and language are representations of identity. The change of identity is often accompanied with certain changes represented in culture and language. Identity is usually constructed in cultural acquisition and language learning process; in turn, cultural acquisition and language learning process trigger identity work. In this sense, ‘culture is both a function and a source of identity’ (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 1999, 90); without understanding the culture in a new context, one’s identity work is usually rather difficult, even impossible.

Everyday life plays a crucial role in one’s identity work. In everyday life, the person ‘shapes his world (his immediate environment) and in this way he shapes himself’ (Heller 1984, 6). This means that one can make and remake his/her identity from everyday practices. One’s multiple identities are ‘constructed through social relations, articulated in particular ways and replicated by individuals and groups’ (Hopkins 2010, 7) and they are ‘formed and expressed through communication’ (Martin and Nakayama 2007, 205). This implies that one’s identity is continually negotiated in communication practices, through which he/she can perceive self and others, and then construct his/her identity. Identity negotiation is an interactive activity, in which communicators involved attempt to evoke their desired identities; simultaneously, they also attempt to challenge or support the others’ identities (Ting-Toomey 1999).

3.4. Forces in Everyday Life

Culture and ideology are often mentioned when talking about the possible forces that shape everyday life and identity. Language learning, including the process of English learning, is related to identity work, which has been discussed in my literature review. Therefore, in this research project, Chinese students’ culture, ideology and their learning process of English language are supposed to be the forces that influence their everyday life. There are also certain resistance forces at play, when Chinese students find themselves located in two or more cultures and ideologies. These forces are supposed to bring about Chinese students’ identity work. All these forces are dynamic and interact with the changes of Chinese students’ social and cultural spaces.

In this section, culture and ideology are regarded as hidden forces involved in Chinese students’ everyday life. Language – a social semiotic and ‘ideological sign’ (Volosinov 1973, 15) – reflects Chinese students’ culture and identity, and it also mediates their everyday communication. The learning of English language enables Chinese students to cross cultural boundaries and communicate with others. Cultural identity and national identity are discussed as well, since they are likely to influence Chinese students’ communication practices in Australia.
3.4.1. Culture

Culture is a complex and controversial concept. From an anthropological perspective, culture is ‘a pattern of learned, group-related perception, including both verbal and nonverbal language attitudes, values, belief systems, disbelief systems, and behavior’ (Singer 1987, 34). From a communication perspective, culture is ‘a learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, norms, and social practice, which affect the behaviors of a relatively large group of people’ (Lustig and Koester 2010, 25). According to these definitions, culture can be seen as a set of learned and shared ideas and it influences people’s social performances. In the field of communication across cultures, culture is defined as ‘a complex frame of reference that consists of patterns of traditions, beliefs, values, norms, symbols and meanings that are shared to varying degrees by interacting members of a community’ (Ting-Toomey 1999, 10). Ting-Toomey also notes that culture is like an iceberg: the deeper layers such as traditions, beliefs and values are hidden from people’s views. It is the underlying set of beliefs and values that always drive people’s thinking, reactions and their communication practices.

Culture is ‘the best that has been thought and said in the world’ (Arnold 1960, 6), and such a definition usually refers to high culture in social life. In Arnold’s thinking, ‘culture was intimately connected to “perfection”, “beauty” and “intelligence”, which he saw residing in great and permanently valuable works of art and literature’ (Lo Bianco 2003, 15). In contrast to Arnold’s aesthetic and elitist conception, Williams (2002, 93) offered his understanding of culture and stressed the everyday lived character of culture, defining culture as ‘a whole way of life’. The two definitions pose different meanings of culture, but they offer concrete cultural forms for people to perceive.

Culture can be a powerful force influencing our everyday life. ‘People compete about culture and they compete with it’ (Jenkins 1992, 128). Kramsch (1998, 10) also argues that ‘cultures are not only heterogeneous and constantly changing, but they are the sites of struggle for power and recognition’. Culture is regarded as a form of capital and it can entitle human beings certain privileges. Further, culture provides us with a particular space, and everyone attached to it feels a degree of sameness and commonality. If one’s cultural environment changes, his/her new cultural space often needs to be appropriated so as to live in more or less comfortably.

As mentioned before, culture embraces everyday practices and practical intelligence and wisdom. In everyday life, culture influences human behaviours and values, and it functions as an invisible force to guide an individual’s social practices. As a member of a group, one’s everyday performances are influenced by his/her group culture, which is viewed as a result of ‘enculturation’ (Scollon and Scollon 2001, 162). Yet, ‘culture is ordinary’ means that culture can be a presentation of ‘a whole way of life’ (Williams 2002, 91). Everyone’s everyday life as a set of particular cultural practices in his/her socio-cultural context is distinctive in many aspects, for example, making friends and celebrating festivals. Each individual is reacting to his/her own culture and pushing its evolution. Therefore, culture is not a static system; rather, culture is ‘dynamic and changes with the people within the system’ (Ting-Toomey 1999, 14).

3.4.2. Ideology

The influences of ideology exist ubiquitously; ideology should never be ignored in
everyday life. Generally, ideology is understood as the ‘meaning in the service of power’ (Fairclough 1995, 14). It consists of the common ideas held by a particular group, and these ideas are organised in certain ways (Thwaites, Davis, and Mules 1994). It is also perceived as ‘a set of social, political, and moral values, attitudes, outlooks, and beliefs that shape a social group’s interpretation of its behaviors and its world’ (Schwandt 2001, 123). Ideology influences everyone’s social practices and it best serves the interests of the ruling classes. As a set of ideas controlled by the ruling classes, ideology exists from top down, and is eventually reflected in everyday life.

Ideology is not only concerned about what people think but rather about how people act, and it exists as an apparatus and its associated practices. That is, ideologies are practical, and ‘they motivate people, reinforce patterns of action, and legitimate existing institutions and ways of doing things’ (Gardiner 2000, 189). A series of institutions are considered as ‘ideological state apparatuses’ (Althusser 2008, 17) such as the family, the education system, the church and the communications, and so on. One’s identity work is influenced by the ideology contained in his/her education practice. Ideology is regarded as a cultural system, and it also plays a vital role in one’s everyday practices.

It can be seen that ideological theories stress that all communication practices and all meanings have socio-political dimensions, and that they cannot be understood outside a particular social context (Fiske 1990). In this research project, it is necessary to understand Chinese ideology, since it may still influence and even dominate Chinese students’ everyday practices in Australia. Chinese students’ ideological struggles are likely to be involved in the transition of their lived spaces; these struggles may also trigger their identity work.

3.4.3. Language
Language is not just a communication tool but functions as an indicator of a particular culture’s social realities and their manifestations (DeCapua and Wintergerst 2004). Language is a form of identity representation, and it also can serve to ‘maintain the separate identity of speech community within larger communities’ (Saville-Troike 2003, 16). One’s ‘language symbolizes cultural reality’ (Kramsch 1998, 3); one’s language learning is a form of his/her identity construction. Language learning also influences people’s understanding of culture, since language may signify different meanings to those individuals with different cultural backgrounds.

Language and culture are closely and intricately related. Language ‘lies at the heart of every culture’ (Mikula 2008, 110), and it is a product and a representation of culture. As a matter of fact, ‘any language is a part of a culture and any culture is a part of a language’ (Yang 2009, 147). By learning a language, people become social beings and then learn the particular culture of that society. Practically, language is not the only channel for human beings to communicate; yet, language is ‘the most significant one’ (Halliday 1978, 213), through which an individual is able to learn about the particular culture that he/she is living within.

Language itself is ‘an event, a part of social event, and the outcome of that social event’ (Kress 1988, 86), and this can imply that the meaning of language is influenced by its users and the discourse of that social event. Specifically, meanings in language are created by the people involved when they are communicating in specific contexts.
Language and its meaning are influenced by ideology. ‘We are taking language not as a system of abstract grammatical categories, but rather language conceived as ideologically saturated, language as a world view, even as a concrete opinion, insuring a maximum of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life’ (Bakhtin 1981a, 74). In language communication, words are filled with ‘content and meaning drawn from behavior or ideology’ (Volosinov 1973, 70). One’s understanding of the meaning of language and action is possible, only if he/she understands the language games or social practices in which that language and action occur (Schwandt 2001). To capture the meaning of a language, it is necessary to capture the social practices represented in that particular language.

3.4.4. Cultural identity and national identity
Apart from what I discussed before, I have addressed the concepts of cultural identity and national identity, since they both are supposed to influence the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students in Australia.

One’s cultural identity in essence is a sense of belonging to his/her particular culture or ethnic group. Cultural identity is constructed in a long process that results from membership in a particular culture, and it also involves ‘learning about and accepting the tradition, heritage, language, religion, ancestry, aesthetics, thinking patterns, and social structure of a culture’ (Lustig and Koester 2010, 142). It can be seen that, firstly, one’s cultural identity is closely related to a particular culture that gradually forges his/her self. Secondly, cultural identity is not just an abstract concept; rather, it is a form of practices represented through one’s communication practices.

Holliday, Hyde and Kullman (2010, 20) propose two concepts relating to cultural identities: inherited cultural identity and creative cultural identity. According to them, inherited cultural identity is ‘a state of affairs which, though imposed by the way in which society defines us – and indeed other societies define us, in the case of national cultural perceptions – can be seen as the resource of the material that we have to work with.’ They argue that creative cultural identity signifies ‘a dynamic movement away from this establishment, in which, through playing with the resources, individuals or groups can create a new identity and, indeed, create cultural change.’ The two cultural identities often interact with each other, and they can exist simultaneously. Very often one’s new cultural identity work is likely to be a combination of inherited cultural identity and creative cultural identity when locating in a host cultural context.

National identity is another force that influences one’s communication practices in an intercultural/international context. In essence, one’s national identity is ‘a form of imaginative identification with the symbols and discourse of nation-state’ (Barker 2008, 252). It is not fixed at birth or tied to one’s birth. Instead, one’s national identity is an ongoing project, and it is ‘forged, or instilled in individuals’ growing up in particular places and times’ (Block 2007b, 29). Of course, it is also connected with his/her social, cultural and educational experiences, and it is ideological.

The significance of identity is realised only when it is missing, or when it becomes a
problem in his/her life (Lawler 2008). Bauman (1996, 19) also argues that ‘one thinks of identity whenever one is not sure of where one belongs.’ Today globalisation and modernity provide us with a complex social and cultural context, in which there is the potential for identity crisis. People often need to negotiate their multiple identities in-between two or more cultures. They need to switch their identities when moving from one place to another. These may bring about a hybrid identity for them.

Hybrid identity is ‘an identity that is consciously a mixture of different identities and cultural traditions’ (Martin and Nakayama 2007, 66). It highlights cultural mixing and the emergence of new forms of identity. In the globalised communication practices, we may often encounter strangers whose identities, values and beliefs are not clear to us. Sometimes we may even no longer be sure about our identities. When we are located in a multicultural space, we may develop a hybrid identity. Similarly, there is a possibility of making a hybrid identity for those people living in-between two or more different cultures.

Cultural identity and national identity are involved in everyday communication, including intercultural communication. Cultural identity as an attachment to one’s particular culture, consciously or subconsciously, influences his/her everyday life. Similarly, national identity influences one’s communication practices as well. In this research project, Chinese students’ different-multicultural spaces may make their everyday communication and identity work more complex. Chinese students are likely to face a possibility of developing a hybrid identity when living in-between different cultures.

3.5. Communication as Practice in Everyday Life
3.5.1. To be is to communicate
Communication is an interactive process in which communicators use various forms of symbols to deliver and interpret meaning in a particular social and cultural context (West and Turner 2007). Lie (2003, 23) summarises the complex relationship between communication and culture and lists five important points in this regard: ‘(1) the message consists of culture; (2) the sender operates in his/her own context of culture and the sender is influenced by his/her own cultural environment; (3) the receiver decodes message from his/her own cultural background and the receiver is an actor influenced by culture; (4) the whole process of communication operates in a context of culture; (5) the whole process of communication is embedded in culture and as such the two concepts are inseparable.’ All these points support that ‘culture is communication and communication is culture’ (Hall 1959, 186). Communication thus is a cultural event in a particular context.

However, culture may act as a barrier in the process of communication, since the way of common thinking in one’s culture may be thought to be foolish and ignorant of people living in a different socio-cultural space. Sometimes culture is ‘a potential source of conflict when one culture enters into contact with another’ (Kramsch 2000, 1). The possible communication outcome is that some judgments would puzzle people and bring about misunderstandings. Culture may confuse communicators, when they just move into a new cultural context and are unable to find an appropriate way to communicate.

Communication can be interpreted in another different approach. According to
Bakhtin (1984, 287), ‘to be is to communicate.’ It is evident that this definition does not perceive communication as a process of encoding and decoding complex signs. Instead, Bakhtin’s definition connects communication to everyday life. As a mode of ‘authentic human existence’ (Bakhtin 1984, 293), communication is still a cultural event in everyday life.

Communication is related to identity work, since we are able to recognise the self and others through communication. That is, our identity work is continuously made and remade in everyday communication. Communication helps us develop a dialogical perception of the self and others, as in communication practices ‘each of us occupies a unique time/space, we can see and experience things that others cannot, within our sphere of self activity’ (Gardiner 2000, 54). The reverse is equally true, as the other can also visualise and apprehend those things that we are unable to. As such, it is difficult to make a new identity, if one avoids communication with others.

Communication is a dialogic event. Located in a strange socio-cultural context, one’s participation in inter/transcultural communication implies the frequent shift ‘from fixed cultural meanings and toward the open space of in-between-ness in which the very fact of being located outside of monadic cultures and identities may result in the “surplus of vision” and creative understanding of both the self and the Other’ (Kostogriz 2005a, 195). In this way, the border between the self and the Other becomes a Thirdspace: a third category for understanding cultural dynamics as a process of creative hybridization. Communication is not only a process involving a dialogic relationship between the self and the Other; it is also a way of setting up an inter/transcultural dialogue where interlocutors can experience a Thirdspace - a cradle of hybrid identity.

3.5.2. Chinese communication in everyday life

Generally, the communication practices of Chinese are thought to be influenced by three major cultural philosophies: Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. These cultures and ideologies are undeniably still influencing the communication practices of Chinese even after China opened itself to the world.

In China, Confucianism has dominated ideology and culture and influenced Chinese communication for over two thousand years. Confucianism usually emphasises moral conduct and right human relationship, with cultivation of virtue as a central tenet. The Confucian moral philosophy consists of ‘Ren (benevolent), Li (rites), and Zhongyong (the Middle Way)’ (Lu 2002, 3). Lu argues that the cultural force of Confucianism is so deeply rooted in Chinese consciousness that it continues to provide sense-making schemes and guiding principles for Chinese everyday behaviours and socialization. Thus it is reasonable to predict that in Australia Chinese students may be influenced by Confucianism in their communication practices.

Taoism has a significant influence upon Chinese communication practices, although it is usually regarded as a religion in China. Taoism views Daodejing as its spirit and borrows a lot from it and spreads them as a part of its spirit to influence the everyday life of Chinese. By the way, Daodejing is a classic text, and, according to Chinese tradition, it was written by the sage Laozi around the sixth century BC. Taoism proposes the opposing and complementary forces of Yin and Yang. The two forces need to be always maintained in a harmonious state. The concepts of Yin and Yang
often remind Chinese to keep seeking equilibrium in their communication practices. Influenced by the balance of Yin and Yan, Chinese often learn to achieve a dynamic balance. Sometimes, they may sacrifice benefits so as to obtain a balance in other fields. This philosophical thought is supposed to influence Chinese students’ everyday communication and identity work in Australia.

Buddhism is another force that influences Chinese communication. Buddhism advises people to avoid conflicts with others, including with internal self, so as to achieve a peaceful harmony in their internal mind (Hwang 1998). Influenced by Buddhism, in China communication is often perceived as ‘harmonious, gentle, humble, receptive, mild, indirect, taciturn, and simple’ (Hwang 2002, 97). Harmony is the end rather than the means in Chinese communication practices (Chen and Starosta 1998). All these communication characteristics look similar to Taoism, and some are similar to the communication mode of Confucianism. One possible reason is that in history Confucianism is a dominant force among Chinese communication practices. These concepts of course may Chinese students’ communication practices in Australia.

Such philosophies are regarded ‘as a cultural system’ (Geertz 1993, 87) in China, and they, as ideology and/or religion, are primary forces that influence the everyday life of ordinary Chinese. Most Chinese are actually acculturated in such a cultural context influenced by Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. These cultural philosophies are consciously or unconsciously acquired as a part of their habitus and imbedded in their everyday life. In this research project, all these philosophies are expected to influence the everyday life and identity work of Chinese students, when they move into a host context. Under these circumstances, how to communicate with the Others may become a puzzling issue for Chinese students in Australia.

My discussion of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism is just a short introduction to Chinese cultural patterns that may influence the everyday communication of Chinese. Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism are complex cultural traditions; they cannot be simply illustrated in a short section. More theories derived from Chinese cultures are borrowed and applied to the analyses of research data. The purpose of my discussion here is to remind my audience that Chinese cultural patterns have existed for a long time, and they have become an inseparable part of the everyday life of ordinary Chinese, including Chinese students in Australia.

My discussion of Chinese communication philosophies is not a result of the influence of essentialism. Rather, it provides me with an approach to explore the basic elements involved in Chinese students’ communication practices and identity work in Australia. Chinese students are likely to be affected by Chinese communication philosophies. Yet, in today’s China, people are not just affected by these traditional cultural patterns since globalisation forces have influenced Chinese and their communication practices. Given that ‘every human being is a particular person who comes into the world equipped with a given set of qualities, capabilities and aptitudes’ (Heller 1984, 8), it is possible that every Chinese individual’s communication practices would be different, even though they are brought up in the same cultural environment. Today’s Chinese students may resist certain Chinese cultural patterns due to the influence of the Western culture and mass media. Similarly, when Chinese students are learning and living in Australia, some forces such as new culture, new ideology and those different texts within their institutions may exert a greater influence upon their communication
practices and identity work. As a result, Chinese students’ everyday communication and identity work may become more contradictory, reflecting a tension between identification with two cultural systems of communication.

3.6. Space, Place and Everyday Life
Space is not an abstract concept but the medium of complex social relations. Space is the producer of material object and social relations (Gottdiener 1985). That is, space can produce social relations; in turn, it is reproduced by social relations. ‘Everyday life always takes place in and relates to the immediate environment of a person’ (Heller 1984, 6). Here ‘the immediate environment of a person’ can be understood as his/her specific space and place. In practice, social space is ‘relationally constituted out of the simultaneous co-existence of social relations and interactions’ (Barker 2008, 376). One’s particular space is produced in his/her communication with others; communication is a process of setting up his/her social relations with others and also producing his/her particular space, which is likely to be the birthplace of his/her new identity.

Space is often associated with nation and state, and ‘each state has its a social space’ (Lefebvre, Brenner, and Elden 2009, 225). Influenced by its particular ideology and nature of that place, the space of each nation or state is filled with its particular culture and history, which ultimately influences everyone’s performances in that particular space. In reality, everyone is located in certain social space and everyone’s social space is different from others’. It is imaginable that entering a new social space may bring certain stress and discomfort. Therefore, it is necessary to negotiate and (re)construct new identities in a new space so as to live a decent life in it.

In a liquid society, talking about place, where we belong to, is a common and constant subject for many of us (Hooks 2009). A place can be ‘a locality of experience, meanings and feelings, constitutes historically from social actions’ (Ma 2003, 10). Of course, a place is related to one’s identity work, since it is the focus of his/her experience, memory, desire and identity (Barker 2008). Places are specific sites in our communication practices. One’s identity is related to places, since identity is ‘best approached in very specific context-based analyses’ (Alcoff 2006, 9). The global ‘time-space compression will produce insecurity’ (Massey 1994, 151) for anyone who leaves his/her space and place; identity often needs to be (re)constructed, once his/her familiar space and place have changed.

In this research project, I am concerned about the everyday life of Chinese students in their new spaces and places in Australia. Indeed, Chinese students live and learn in different spaces and places such as their university campus, library, homestay, and so on. All these different social spaces are full of certain forces such as culture and ideology, and they set up specific rules and guide Chinese students’ communication performances. When Chinese students are located in culturally and linguistically different spaces and places, characterised by unfamiliar practices and complex relations, these spatial changes can bring challenges to their communication practices and identity work. Also, Chinese students’ identity work is supposed to be constructed in their new lived spaces and through their everyday communication practices in specific places, which is influenced by the rules and regulations of their spaces and places.
3.7. Conclusion
In this chapter, I have explored significant concepts related to everyday life. The everyday life is viewed as an umbrella, and social practices and relevant theories are fit under this umbrella. I first discussed the significance of everyday life and the reasons why I chose to explore this project from the perspective of everyday life. Given that identity is an important concept related to everyday life, I addressed the concept of identity. Next I discussed the possible forces that are supposed to influence Chinese students’ communication practices, i.e., culture, ideology, language, cultural identity and national identity. I then explored the definition of communication. I also supported Bakhtin’s statement ‘to be is to communicate’, and noted that in essence everyday communication is everyday life. In order to understand the everyday communication of Chinese students, I discussed Chinese communication philosophies in everyday life. These philosophies were seen as cultural and/or ideological forces involved in the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students. Finally, I discussed the concepts of space and place, since everyday communication and identity work always need to be carried out in certain spaces and places.

In the next chapter, I introduce and outline my research method. I borrow a Canadian sociologist, Dorothy E. Smith’s (2005) institutional ethnography as an inquiry mode in this research project. I begin by outlining what institutional ethnography is and why I choose it as a method in this research project. I then introduce the cases in this ethnographic project. I have chosen University X as the institution and seven Chinese students from University X as volunteers in my study. Their biographic backgrounds are presented so as to set up my research context. Next, I discuss the methods of my data collection. I make use of participant observation, semi-structured interviews and photographs as visual data. In the data analysis, I focus on qualitative description and critical events in Chinese students’ everyday life. My dialogues with these participants and my reflectivity help guide my data analysis. Finally, the ethical clearance is presented. All these discussions provide certain theoretical support to my institutional ethnographic study and demonstrate a comprehensive and scientific procedure of this research project.
CHAPTER FOUR
INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY AS A MODE OF INQUIRY

4.1. Introduction
In Chapter Three, I discussed the theoretical framework of this project. Specifically, I chose to examine the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students from the perspective of their everyday life in Australia, since everyday life is of great significance, and it is full of changes and mysteries. I also focused on some major concepts involved in everyday life such as culture, ideology, language, cultural identity and national identity. Culture is a whole way of life, and the everyday life of Chinese students in essence is a representation of their cultural practices and identity work. Ideology is considered to be not only abstract ideas but also a form of practices. Language is interpreted as cultural and social practice, and Chinese students’ English learning is conceived as an approach to learn how to perform properly in their host cultural spaces and places. Cultural identity and national identity are also considered to be the potential forces involved in Chinese students’ everyday communication and identity work in Australia.

The rationale of this research project is informed by Bakhtin’s (1984, 287) concise statement – ‘to be is to communicate.’ Hence, communication is a ubiquitous feature of everyday life. One’s identity work is expected to be influenced by the conditions of his/her everyday life. I also discussed Chinese communication characteristics under the influence of Chinese cultural patterns Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, all of which are expected to assist my examination and discussion of the communication practices and identity work of Chinese students in the following chapters.

In Chapter Three, I also discussed the concepts of space and place, since the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students are always related to particular spaces and places. There are diverse social relations in Chinese students’ lived spaces and places, and they are linked to Chinese students’ communication practices and identity work. Chinese students’ identity work is supposed to be achieved in their communication relations with the Other in different spaces and places; in turn, their intercultural interactions in particular spaces and places are presumed to influence their communication practices and identity work. Chinese students’ communication practices go beyond their university, although their communication practices are often situated inside their university.

This research project is qualitative in its nature. This research mode requires a closer engagement of the researcher with research sites, and it also requires the ongoing revision of design details, data gathering strategies and then carrying out an in-depth data analysis through the researcher’s interactions with the participants involved (Luttrell 2009). All these interactions are present in the process of my research and writing; they help me reflect on and rethink my participants’ communication practices and identity work.

In this chapter, I introduce Dorothy Smith’s (2005) institutional ethnography and argue why I chose it as a mode of inquiry to investigate the everyday lived experiences of Chinese students in Australia. I also introduce the discourse of this institutional ethnography, including University X as the institution and my participants. Next, my data collection methods, i.e. participant observation, semi-
structured interviews and photographs as a visual research method, are discussed. I then discuss the procedure of the data analysis and discussion. Finally, the ethical clearance in this institutional ethnography is introduced.

4.2. Why Institutional Ethnography

Ethnography is to commit us to an exploration, description, and analysis of a complex of relations ‘from the entry point of some particular person or persons whose everyday world of working is organized thereby’ (Smith 1987, 160). Simply, it is used to describe and interpret social expressions. In doing so, ethnographic researchers usually need to get themselves involved with the participants so as to discover facts and interpret them on the basis of certain theories.

Institutional ethnography is defined by Smith (2005) as ‘a sociology for people’. It starts from ordinary people’s everyday experiences, and argues that the experiences are as various as those people. Institutional ethnography does not aim to surpass a variety of all these differences; rather, these differences give rise to a matrix of the everyday activities (Smith 1999). Smith (2005, 225) further explains that institutional ethnography explores ‘the social relations organizing institutions as people participate in them and from their perspectives.’ The purpose is to go beyond what people have known and then find out how what they are doing is connected with what others are doing in ways they cannot see.

In institutional ethnography, researchers often begin from where ordinary people are in their everyday world to explain the complex social relations of the society of which we are part, and then explain an organisation that is not fully present in any one individual’s everyday experience (Smith 1987). That is, institutional ethnographers usually ‘would begin in the actualities of the lives of some of those involved in the institutional process and focus on how those actualities were embedded in social relations’ (Smith 2005, 31).

Institutional ethnography usually ‘begins by locating a standpoint in an institutional order that provides the guiding perspective from which that order will be explored’ (Smith 2005, 32). By starting from the standpoints of actual participants in a particular institutional site, institutional ethnographers are concerned about the ordinary lived experiences of people. From there, they bring a particular interest to studying social settings and interaction under particular conditions.

Institutional ethnographers ‘make everyday/everynight life our problematic’ (Sprague 2009, 88). In fact, institutional ethnographers are not just concerned about the lived experiences within an institution. They often collect data in the everyday world and then proceed to explicate a problematic by going beyond any local setting. Smith (2005) also argues that institutional ethnography is mostly concerned about common people’s experience and their doings; it is concerned about how these are connected to what is beyond their experience. That is, institutional ethnography is also projected beyond the local so as to discover the potential social organisation that governs the local setting.

In institutional ethnography, Smith (1993, 6) uses ‘relations of ruling’ to describe the complexity of extra-local relations that provide a specialisation of organisation, control, and initiative in contemporary societies. She explains that relations of ruling
include the array of discourses (from scientific and technical to cultural and political), that intersect, interpenetrate and coordinate the multiple sites of ruling. From my point of view, social relations are practices through which people’s everyday lives are socially organised. Further, ‘people participate in social relations, often unknowingly, as they act competently and knowledgeably to concert and coordinate their own actions with professional standards or family expectations or organizational rules’ (Campbell and Gregor 2002, 32). However, these dominant relations would become visible only when we start enquiry in the everyday worlds of people’s experiences, since they coordinate people’s activities across and beyond local sites of their everyday experience (Smith 2002). In other words, ‘the relations of ruling do not disappear by learning about them, however, nor can they be shaken off by individuals themselves’ (Campbell 2006, 105). Indeed, they are present in our everyday practices, and they mediate our everyday practices as well.

Institutional ethnographers treat people’s lived experiences of the everyday world as ‘the problematic of an investigation’ (Campbell and Gregor 2002, 46). In this research project, I adopted institutional ethnography not only to observe the everyday life of Chinese students but also to explore the complex relations involved in their everyday experiences and their institutional life (i.e., university studies). I am interested in the ruling relations in these institutional sites as well. Chinese students’ everyday experiences are translocal and also go beyond their institutional environment. Given that institutional ethnography opens up into larger social relations so as to explore the subtle and sophisticated institutional orders (Smith 2002), I located Chinese students’ everyday life, including their identity work, in their institutional orders and focused on their communication practices inside and outside university. By exploring their everyday lived experiences through their standpoints, I aimed to examine their communication practices and identity work.

4.3. Discourse in Institutional Ethnography

4.3.1. Discourse as a site of identity work

In institutional ethnography, discourse refers to ‘translocal relations coordinating the practices of definite individual; talking, writing, reading, watching, and so forth, in particular local places at particular times’ (Smith 2005, 224). According to Gee (2008, 161), ‘a Discourse (capital D) is a socially accepted association among ways of using language and other symbolic expressions, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting, as well as various tools, technologies, or props that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or “social network”, or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful “role”, or to signal that one is filling a social niche in a distinctively recognizable fashion.’

As a matter of fact, each of us is a member of many different Discourses, and each Discourse can produce and represent one of our identities. These Discourses usually don’t represent consistent and compatible values. Rather, there are some conflicts among these Discourses (Gee 2008). A Discourse is ‘a sort of identity kit’ (Gee 1996, 127), and these different Discourses are particular ways of being in the world (Gee 1990). One needs to know different Discourses and learn how to act appropriately so as to take on a particular social role as his/her identity which others will recognise.

I would like to introduce Gee’s primary Discourses and secondary Discourses, since I borrowed and used them in discussing and making sense of my data in this project.
Primary Discourses are ‘those to which people are apprenticed early in life during their primary socialization as members of particular families with their sociocultural settings’ (Gee 1996, 137). One’s primary Discourses constitute the first social identity, and it is a base within which he/she can acquire and/or resist other or secondary Discourses later in one’s life. Yet, secondary Discourses are ‘those to which people are apprenticed as part of their socializations within various local, state, and national groups and institutions outside early home and peer-group socialization’ (Gee 1996, 137). Secondary Discourses constitute the recognisability and meaningfulness of our ‘public’ (more formal or institutional) sites and practices. Also, ‘Discourses acquired later in life can influence a person’s primary Discourse, having various effects on it, (re)shaping it in various ways’ (Gee 1996, 141).

Further, ‘each Discourse in a society is “owned” and “operated” by a socioculturally defined group of people. These people are accepted as “members” of the Discourse and play various “roles,” and give various “performances,” within it’ (Gee 1992, 107). Located in different Discourses, influenced by such a defined group and their performances, our identity work may occur within us subconsciously. We are also expected to achieve an appropriate identity from multiple identities so as to avoid our identity crisis and feel ‘comfortable’ in different Discourses. Yet, it is in and through diverse Discourses and through our communication practices that we gradually make clear to ourselves and others who we are, and what we are doing at a given time and place (Gee 1996).

Bakhtin (1981b) also suggested his concepts of authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse. According to him, human coming-to-consciousness is always under a constant struggle between these two discourses. ‘The authoritative word demands us that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it’ (Bakhtin 1981b, 342). In the authoritative discourse, its authority is acknowledged, and it is a prior and primary discourse. Sometimes ‘one can disobey authoritative discourse, but, so long as it remains fully authoritative, one cannot argue with it’ (Morson and Emerson 1990, 219). Yet, ‘the internally persuasive word is half-ours and half-someone else’s’ (Bakhtin 1981b, 345). Therefore, internally persuasive discourse is not finite but is open; it is ‘subject to change and is constantly interacting with our ever-evolving ideologies’ (Freedman and Ball 2004, 8).

From the perspective of Bakhtin’s discourses, it can be seen that there is a possibility of identity work occurring in the transition of one’s primary Discourses and secondary Discourses. It is supposed that Chinese students’ identity work is included in their struggles of the authoritative discourse and the internally persuasive discourse. In these constant struggles, such forces as ideology, culture, language, and so on are involved. These struggles are important, as ‘one’s own discourse and one’s own voice, although born of another or dynamically stimulated by another, will sooner or later begin to liberate themselves from the authority of the other discourse’ (Bakhtin 1981b, 348). One’s internally persuasive discourse is ‘never a dead thing, never something finished; rather, it is a kind of impulse toward the future’ (Morson and Emerson 1990, 221). Hence, one’s identity work, ‘as a becoming’ (Barker and Galasiński 2001, 29), is a continuous representation and outcome of these struggles. Similarly, Chinese students’ identity work is also supposed to be conducted in these
constant struggles, and it never can be finished.

In this research project, the authoritative discourse of Chinese students is supposed to be dominated by Australian culture and institutional practices that exclude the Discourses of Chinese culture and previous experiences of learning. International students are presumed to have previous authoritative discourse dominated by Chinese culture and ideology. Their previous authoritative discourse, like the new authoritative discourse in Australia, influences their everyday communication practices and identity work consciously and subconsciously. In making sense of their everyday life in Australia, every Chinese student is engaged in ‘internally persuasive discourse’, in which he/she always fights against the two authoritative discourses simultaneously, when moving from primary Discourses to secondary Discourses. Yet, it is in these constant internal struggles that Chinese students can form their own voices and (re)construct their identities. Of course, the complex struggle is distinctive for every individual; his/her identity work is also diverse in various institutional sites.

4.3.2. University X
I chose University X as one of the institutional sites in this institutional ethnography, not because it is especially distinctive but rather because it is regarded as a representative of the university system in Australia. Located in Melbourne, University X now has already successfully attracted a large number of international students, of course including many Chinese students. Hopefully University X represents both the status quo and the development of Australian higher education.

In institutional ethnography, an institution ‘is meant to inform a project of empirical inquiry, directing the researcher’s attention to coordinated and intersecting work processes taking place in multiple sites’ (DeVault and McCoy 2006, 17). It should be noted that in this project the institution not only focuses on University X but also beyond the university environment in Australia, since these participants’ everyday experiences beyond the campus are equally important for the study of communication practices and identity work.

4.3.3. Participants
The purpose of participant selection is to ensure that the research sample is ‘as diverse as possible within the boundaries of the defined population’ (Lewis 2003, 82). To achieve this, I used two approaches to attract appropriate participants for this project. Firstly, I distributed my invitation letters on the University X campus. These letters were written in plain English so that potential participants were able to understand this research project. Those Chinese students interested in this project were expected to contact me for inclusion as possible volunteers. The invitation letter was also placed on Chinese students’ virtual forum on the Internet. It was an open invitation letter on the social network to ensure that potential participants could understand this project. Secondly, I visited various classrooms in University X so as to deliver the invitation letter and encourage Chinese students to become involved in this research project. In this way, I also could answer these students’ questions.

Chinese students who responded were then contacted and selected, based on their experiences, their personal backgrounds and the period of their stay in Australia, so as to ensure that these selected participants represented the large population of Chinese students in Australia. Finally, seven students from Mainland China were selected as
voluntary participants. They were enrolled in either a Bachelor’s Degree course or a Master’s Degree course. They are representative and heterogeneous in various aspects such as age, gender, geography, family, cultural and social class status, although they are often simply viewed as Chinese students in Australia.

4.3.4. Presenting participants
In this research project, I argue, together with Smith (2005, p. 61), that ‘each person is unique; each has a biography and experience that is her or his own; each is positioned differently from the others; each therefore sees things from a different perspective, feels things differently, has different needs and desires, different interests.’ One’s biography is connected to a particular life story, and each story presents us with a real sketch of a person’s life. I present here a short biography of each participant.

I acknowledge that ‘there are different models of Chinese culture and there are different Chinese identities’ (Tan 2003, 55). These participants come from different regions in China, and they have different age, gender, families, social class, different purposes and expectations from their families. Because of the diversity of local, particularistic traditions in which they grew up, these participants’ lived experiences are very different from each other. To understand these stories from their individual positions, I provided these participants’ biographies. These narrated short biographies include brief information about their family, their course, their expectation of overseas studying, the time span of stay in Australia, and so on.

Alex
My English name is Alex. I am 26 years old this year. I live in Huainan, a small coal city in Anhui province, China. I come from a core family, my father, mother and me, just three of us in my family. My father entered his university in 1977, and my mother also entered the university in the same year. My father is a civil engineer, and my mother is a doctor. Now I am studying Master of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language (TESOL) at School of Education of University X. I graduated from my university in 2008 in China. I choose to study here, because I feel that I need more study, especially in my teaching methodology, after I graduated from my Bachelor course. I then choose Australia as my study destination.

Baixue
My name is Baixue, and I will be 26 after five months. ... My family is in Baoding, Hebei province, China and I come from a peasant family. In my impression, my parents are capable to make money, but they are also very economical to support the family. They now are supporting three children, and we are all healthy. We are striving for our own dreams, although we cannot say that we have achieved a lot. My parents’ life is tough. ... Now I am doing my Nursing Bachelor course in Australia, and I just need to study for one year as I had three-year studying and practice experiences in China, before I come here. I come to Australia, since I want to look for a chance to develop overseas, even when I choose the course. ... I want to have a different experience from others. I think it is the main reason, and this can be regarded as my dream as well.

Ivy
My name is Ivy, and I am 24 this year. I come from Guangzhou, China. My mother works in a national-state company as a metrologist. My father is a businessman, and he runs a company by himself. When I was ten years old, I moved to Guangzhou with my parents, and there I finished my high school. After high school, I went back to my hometown Wuhan, and there I studied in an international school cooperated by China and an overseas university. Why do I choose to go abroad? When I saw many people, including my father’s friends, had gone abroad, honestly at that time I really admired them. I felt that they could broaden their vision and learn a lot, and
they could experience much different stuff overseas. However, I have just lived in China, although
China is not a small country. After living in China for many years, I want to experience the
differences in different cultures. I also want to learn more stuff such as another language. This is
one of the reasons that I choose to study abroad. ... The main reason to choose to study overseas
was my dream. I did want to go abroad, so I proposed such an idea to my parents, and they
thought it was not a bad idea. My family can support me, so I choose this way.

Jordan
My name is Jordan. I come from Hefei, Anhui province, China and my family is living there. I came
to University X at the end of April 2008. I first studied in a language school. After half a year, I
entered a preliminary course. It is a postgraduate qualifying program course, which is similar with
an adult bridging course from a diploma to a master course. Then I started my master course, and
I did Sports Management here for two years. I will graduate in July 2011. ... One reason that I
come to Australia is due to the financial consideration. Compared to studying in the UK and the
United States, studying in Australia is a bit cheaper. Another reason is that I could not get a good
job in China after I graduated. ... At that time there was a tide of studying overseas, and my family
felt that they would have Mianzi (face) if I could go to study overseas, so they sent me here.

Malu
My name is Malu, and I am 26 years old. I come from Tianjin, China, and I have been here for one
and a half years. Now I am doing my Dual Master Course, Finance and Accounting. I will graduate
in July 2012, but I plan to extend one more term to the end of 2012. The main reason that I
choose Australia is that I have a relative in Australia, and I think that perhaps they can look after
me, although the relative is living in Sydney. Yet, he does not give me much help. ... The reason
that I choose University X maybe is because my score in my Chinese university is not too good. ... Anyhow, I think that in Australia the reputation of Accounting course at University X is not bad.

Rock
My name is Rock. I am 22 and I am a Chinese. I am doing Accounting at University X, and it is my
third year. I come to Australia as I am looking forward to the life here. ... I come from Wuhan and I
choose my Accounting course because it was a popular course when I went abroad. The course is
also helpful for me to apply permanent residency. My original plan is to stay here after
graduation and then study further. Yet, due to the change of international educational policy,
now I have not decided it yet. ... I feel that I stay here as an international student rather than an
individual who has integrated into the society. In my everyday life, I spend much time staying on
the campus and little time outside my university. Occasionally I work as a part-time, but most
people that I have contacted are still Chinese people, and only few are the local people.

Shao
My name is Shao, and I am almost 27. I came to Australia on January 1 2009, and I am studying in
my last term at University X. I am majoring in Business Information System, and I will graduate at
the end of this year. I come from Wuhan, Hubei province. My original family was in Wuhan. ... I
finished my first Bachelor in China, and then I came here. In fact, I did not have any plan, and I
just would like to come out to have a look so as to have a broad vision, like many people studying
here. I felt like dreaming when I first touched the land. I have never imagined that one day I could
come to study. Here all things to me are new, including my life. In addition to the people and
things here, the main reason is that my learning experience at University X is completely different
from that in China.

4.4. Data Collection
Institutional ethnography, ‘like other forms of ethnography, relies on interviewing,
observation, and documents as data’ (Campbell 2006, 92). I also adopted multiple
techniques to capture the reality of Chinese students’ everyday lived experiences in
Australia in this institutional ethnography. Specifically, I made use of participant observation, semi-structured interviews and photographs to collect data in this project.

4.4.1. Participant observation
As a research method, ethnography is a way of making a detailed description and analysis of human beings and their behavior based on a long-term observational study on the spot (Heider 1976). Here participant observation for ethnographers means ‘immersion in a culture’ (Fetterman 1998, 35), and it requires long-term close contacts with participants. In doing so, an ethnographic researcher often becomes directly involved in people’s daily lives. By becoming an insider, the ethnographer can get much closer to the subjects of his or her study and is presented with a richer variety of interaction settings in which more information can be revealed and recorded (Harper 1979) for research.

The only way of knowing a socially constructed world is ‘knowing it from within’ (Smith 1990, 22). To achieve this, an ethnographer needs to constantly switch his/her identity between being an insider and being an authentic ethnographer in participant observation. In this research project, my identity switching between a Chinese student and an ethnographer was also done frequently so as to facilitate the development of an authentic participant-observer position. This helped me gain access to the everyday practices of Chinese students. My identity switching was necessary due to the need to collect and analyse my data, whilst avoiding negative influences of being an insider. Such a double positioning presented challenges for me; however, it would be difficult to access the data first-hand without the advantage of a dual identity.

My lived experience was an advantage, and it enabled me to enter ordinary Chinese students’ lived community as a participant-observer. Having worked as a lecturer in a Chinese university for over ten years, I have accumulated my ‘work knowledges’ so as to enter the world of these participants before coming to Australia. Here ‘work knowledges’ is borrowed to refer to ‘what people know of and in their work and how it is coordinated with the work of others’ (Smith 2005, 229). Smith explains that it is a major resource for the institutional ethnographer, and it is dialogically evoked in the interviewer-informant interactions when it is based in the informant’s own experience or in the observer’s personal experience/observations of people’s activities in a given setting. In doing this research project, my ‘work knowledges’ assisted me to observe Chinese participants’ everyday communication and their identity work in Australia.

4.4.2. Semi-structured interview
In this institutional ethnography, I also used the semi-structured interview process to record the narratives of Chinese students. This type of interview provides ‘a way of generating empirical data about the social world by asking people to talk about their lives’ (Gubrium and Holstein 1997, 113). In semi-structured interview process, the interviewer often has a general plan for the development of the topics, but a fixed order for discussion of these topics is not required. The interviewer is required to ask specific questions; he/she is ‘free to probe beyond them if necessary’ (Ackroyd and Hughes 1992, 104).

In order to obtain their first-person accounts, Chinese participants were encouraged to speak in their own ways in my semi-structured interviews. They were given a degree of latitude in the way they answered the questions, the length of their responses, and
even the topics that they discussed. In my semi-structured interviews, these Chinese participants’ responses were guided by prompts in order to ensure that they did not misinterpret the question asked.

Such a semi-structured interview was a feasible way for me to collect data from these Chinese students’ everyday lived experience in Australia. Here, experience refers to ‘what people come to know that originates in people’s bodily being and action’ (Smith 2005, 224). The experience emerges in dialogues, spoken or written, among particular people at particular times and in particular places, including their self-reflection. The experience also includes Chinese participants’ reflection, an internal dialogue within. Their self-reflection is not only a meaningful recall of their lived experience; it is a form of representing their negotiation in their internally persuasive discourse.

4.4.3. Photographs as visual texts

The use of photographs in research practice is controversial. Photographs are usually subjective and their representation is not neutral, since photographs are regarded as ‘the camera-person’s and editor’s interpretation of objectivity’ (Bellman and Jules-Rosette 1977, 3). Yet, photographs are also viewed to be realistic and objective visual recordings and presentations of the lived world, as (from their origin) they have been assigned a social use that is held to be ‘realistic’ and ‘objective’ (Bourdieu et al. 1990, 74).

Photographs can be used as stimuli to open up a conversation in interviews, and they also can help researchers ‘establish rapport with respondents, contextualize and lend specificity to the subject matter in the question, and humanize the portrayal of respondents’ (Gold 2007, 143). To gain rapport with participants, photographs are utilised as stimuli to focus interviewees, free up their memories, and set up topics that the interviewer and the interviewees involved can talk together in a more relaxed manner (Loizos 2000). Further, photographs are regarded as ‘a means of producing data through negotiation and reflexivity’ (Canal 2004, 38) in interviews.

Photographs can act as a visual supplement to text data. As ‘a visual recording’ (Pink 2007, 72), photographs provide readers with a context of research, and they also provide ‘a wealth of visual detailed and physical context in which to “place” a particular social phenomenon’ (Wagner 1979, 191). In research practice, we also ‘treat photographs as witnesses to the world and what happens when we do’ (McCoy 1995, 183), since the camera often can capture minor details that researchers may have missed (Fetterman 1998).

In this institutional ethnography, some photographs were used to record and represent the everyday lived experiences of Chinese students, including their identity work in/beyond their institution. These photographs were crucial and meaningful evidence for me to understand Chinese students’ everyday communication practices and capture their identity work in their secondary Discourses.

To collect the detailed data, all these methods mentioned previously were interwoven in this institutional ethnography. Specifically, first, a close first-hand ethnographic participant observation was applied to this research project. I behaved like a flâneur, crossing between the Chinese and Australian cultural context, and this helped me capture the everyday life of Chinese students. As an ordinary Chinese student and a
well-trained participant-observer, my dual identity provided me with insights into these participants’ communication practices and identity work, by talking to them about everyday topics, discussing their academic issues, witnessing their everyday events, and experiencing similar internally persuasive discourses with them. Secondly, by employing a semi-structured interview process, it was expected that a relatively loose space for the discussion of Chinese students’ communication practices and identity work would be established. Finally, photographs were used as cues for the dialogues between these participants and me; all these photographs recorded and represented Chinese students’ lived experiences. All in all, the use of these methods provided me with an in-depth understanding of the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students in Australia.

4.5. Texts and Dialogues in Data Analysis
In the everyday actuality of people’s work, texts ‘coordinate what people are doing in one local setting with work done by others elsewhere or at different times’ (Smith 2002, 34). Texts can bring external regulation into the immediacy of the everyday world. In this institutional ethnography, the texts of University X such as the disciplines of the university and their course curriculum create an authoritative discourse for Chinese students. They are key to institutional coordinating, regulating the concerting of all people’s work, including Chinese students’, in such institutional settings. All these texts are of central importance to this institutional ethnography, because they set up essential connection ‘between the local of our (and others’) bodily being and the translocal organization of the ruling relations’ (Smith 2005, 119).

Another set of texts should not be neglected in this research project. To collect the data, all the interviews were first scripted and then translated into English, which produced another set of texts. This second set of texts, including those photographs, represents the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students inside and outside their university. The second set of texts is a detailed document of Chinese students’ responses to the first set of texts, those diverse texts of their institution. The second set of texts is produced as dialogic outcomes from these Chinese participants’ internally persuasive discourses, from which I am able to explore how Chinese students’ communication practices and identity work are influenced by those texts of their institution (i.e. certain policies and institutional regulations).

My data analysis was a process of reading the two sets of texts (mostly the second set of texts) and interpreting their meaning. ‘The concept of a text-reader conversation recognises reading a text as an actual interchange between a reader’s activating of the text and her or his response to it’ (Smith 2005, 228). Reading the second set of texts (i.e. the collected data), it was expected that I would experience Chinese participants’ communication practices, their authoritative discourses and internally persuasive discourses, including their identity work, influenced by their primary Discourses and secondary Discourses. It would help me capture social relations under the influence of their institutional texts. There were likely to be dynamic interactions between the two sets of texts as well.

Reading the data texts, it was anticipated that it would be possible to comprehend the meaning of each utterance between these participants and me. ‘Every utterance is a dialogue between the givens of language or discourse and the speaker’s intentions, the hearer, the situation, and so on’ (Smith 2005, 127). Smith (2005) further clarifies two
dialogues involved in the process of data collection and analysis: one is with the people in interviews or in the field situations so as to create a major part of what becomes its data, and the other is an experiential dialogue, which aims to take researchers and participants back into the institutions of academic, professional, and related specialised discourse. In my research process, the first dialogue occurred in my conversation with these participants or in the field notes with an observational setting; the second dialogue existed in my understanding of these texts produced in the primary dialogue. Reading these texts, Chinese participants’ backgrounds were considered as well, since my priority was to capture the meaning in the data.

4.6. Methods of Data Analysis
The aim of data analysis is to ‘pick out the key events in the field which were “focal events” for the people under study’ (Brewer 2000, 111). All these events of course are ‘unplanned and unanticipated’ (Webster and Mertova 2007, 83). In this institutional ethnography, some events beyond these Chinese participants’ institutional experiences were analysed, since they helped me capture their everyday communication and identity work as well. I paid great attention to individual accounts as whole cases as so to avoid repetitions and compared their stories with each other. In doing so, all these collected ‘data are recontextualised as they are reintegrated into themes that combine units of like meaning taken from the accounts of multiple research respondents’ (Ayres, Kavanaugh, and Knafl 2003, 872). In analysing the data, such factors as the location of the setting, the sensitivity of the topic, the complex relations involved in the field and the social interactions between the researcher and the participants are assumed to influence how the data are interpreted and conveyed, and these factors are concerned in writing up the results.

The data analysis incorporated the reflexivity of participants and the researcher (me). Reflexivity requires ‘a critical attitude towards data, and recognition of the influence on the research’ (Brewer 2000, 127). Chinese participants’ verbal data are regarded as reflexivity of the real actualities that they have experienced in Australia. As a Chinese student in Australia, reading Chinese-English translated data texts often has some resonance with me. Whilst carrying out the analysis, my reflexivity is expected to help me catch the authentic meaning and think deeper about Chinese participants’ everyday life and their identity work, which very often is similar to my own lived experience as a Chinese student. This also enabled me to capture the internal world of these participants and get access to authentic dimension of their everyday life and identity work.

As I mentioned in the previous section, I collected the two sets of texts and established a sense of dialogue in analysing these data. The dialogic data analysis is a way of interpreting these texts. Again, the two sets of texts are interacted and interrelated, and there is a dialogic relationship between them. The first set of texts provide the general regulations for Chinese students’ communication practices; while the second set of texts, including those collected photographs, represents their authentic everyday practices in Australia, which is a vivid response to their perception of the first set of texts.

Working with these data aroused my sense of dialogical relationships between the two sets of texts. My awareness of dialogue was even integrated into my interviews with these participants, and my purpose was to set up an authentic dialogue with them. To
achieve this, all the interviews were transcribed and categorised according to the
effects of these events on the participants. These participants’ language was concerned
as well, since ‘language creates a particular view of reality’ (Richardson 1995, 199). Given that ‘actuality is always more and other than is spoken, written, or pictured’ (Smith 2005, 125), I hence attempted to capture the meaning beyond their words. The collected photographs contributed to my data analysis as well, and these visual texts allowed more details to be seen within a specific context. They were used to construct the original context and even re-identified the truth in the process of my research. By re-organising these detailed data, I engaged in the dialogical reading of the texts and tried to re-present my participants’ everyday communication and identity work.

In this research thesis, all the data are divided into two major themes: one is Chinese students’ everyday communication practices, and the other is their identity work. In Part Two, Chinese students’ communication practices consist of their communication practices inside and outside university. Chinese students’ communication practices inside institution are made up with their early challenges and their academic learning discussed in Chapter Five and their interpersonal communication discussed in Chapter Six. In Chapter Seven, Chinese students’ communication practices outside institution are concerned with their religion, daily life, their homestay, part-time work, their communication with parents and their e-communication practices. In Part Three, Chinese students’ identity work constitutes three chapters. In Chapter Eight, Chinese students’ institution identity is discussed from the perspective of different portraits and their experiences of identity transformation. In Chapter Nine, Chinese students’ cultural identity and national identity are analysed. Chinese students’ sense of being marginalised and their sense of belonging are discussed as well, since they both are supposed to be connected to their cultural identity work in Australia. In Chapter Ten, Chinese students’ identity negotiation as part of their identity work is analysed. The diverse forces involved in their identity negotiation are discussed as well. It should be noted that my categorisation of Chinese students’ identities is just for the sake of my data discussion, since in reality Chinese students’ everyday communication practices and identity work are inseparable from each other.

The data analysis in this institutional ethnography is a result of dynamic interactions between theories and practices. In discussing the data in the next chapters, I paid much attention to setting up a dialogue with the theories addressed in Chapter Three. Some discussions were carried out to verify relevant theories and research outcomes reviewed in Chapter Two. I paid great attention to Chinese students’ communication practices in their new socio-cultural context as well, which lays a solid foundation for my conclusion and reflection in the last chapter.

4.7. Ethical Clearance
An ethical clearance is undertaken to help ensure that researchers follow strict ethical regulations and that the participants, as volunteers involved, know exactly what is occurring and how they can protect themselves in a research project. This research project was granted ethical clearance, and the various ethics clearance regulations have been fully abided by.

Specifically, a clearly written letter was provided to the potential participants inviting them to participate in this research project. The letter briefly outlined this project and some practical aspects associated with conducting it. All the selected participants
freely gave informed consent before the project was commenced. The privacy of these participants involved was guaranteed in this research project. They were assured that all the documents collected throughout the accumulation of the research data would be safely kept and would not be released to a third party without these participants’ permission. Both anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed in this research project. All the participants were advised that they could withdraw from the project at any time, and that no information collected from them would then be included in this project. They were also acknowledged in a written notice stating the integral nature and significance of this research project. Some photographs were used to record Chinese students’ everyday life, and the participants involved gave written permission to use such photographs.

4.8. Conclusion
In this chapter, I reviewed Smith’s (2005) institutional ethnography and adopted it as an inquiry mode for this research project. I also introduced University X and provided a short biography of each participant involved. I discussed Gee’s concept of Discourses and Bakhtin’s authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse, since identity work is a constant struggle between primary Discourses and secondary Discourses, between authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse. I used participant observation, semi-structured interviews and photographs as a means of data collecting in this research project. In the process of data analysis, I set up dialogues in reading all these texts, and these dialogues were expected to help me communicate with Chinese participants. My reflectivity as an internal dialogue helped me understand the data and these participants. Finally, steps were taken to obtain ethical clearance and ensure the safety of these Chinese participants so as to protect the validity of this research project.

In Part Two and Part Three, I will explore Chinese students’ lived experiences from two perspectives – everyday communication and identity work. Placing such data into the two themes gives structure to my discussion and analysis – the two themes are closely linked and interacted. Specifically, Chapter Five is focused on the everyday experiences of Chinese students inside their university; I also address their impression of university life and their learning events. By observing Chinese students’ lived experiences, I discuss the reasons underneath their communication practices as well.
PART TWO
DATA AND ANALYSIS
EVERYDAY COMMUNICATION OF CHINESE STUDENTS

It should be noted that Chinese students’ learning in Australia actually extends beyond their institutional experiences within university boundaries. In Part Two, I therefore choose to represent my data from their lived experiences in different places that constitute the social and cultural space of Australia. I look at Chinese students’ lived experiences inside and outside university, and how these experiences reflect their communication, including identity work. In their host spaces, different cultural values, rulings of relations and ideologies are interwoven together, all of which make Chinese students’ everyday communication and identity work more complex than living in China.

It is difficult, if at all impossible, to separate Chinese students’ communication practices according to different places. Communication is a medium through which Chinese students’ social practices are fulfilled and represented as their everyday events. It is necessary to see what events they have experienced in their new spaces. Most of these everyday events such as attending lectures, writing assignments, sitting examinations and communicating with university staff members occur inside their university, and they are interrelated and interacted in everyday life. Identity is ‘an achievement of the person’s activity – but only within the contexts and events of social interaction’ (Holland and Lachicotte 2007, 118). These everyday events influence how Chinese students understand their self and the Others; their identity work also occurs in these everyday events.

I represent the data and discuss two themes – everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students – in Part Two and Part Three. The two themes can never be separated. All these discussions in Part Two and Part Three are based on Chinese participants’ communication practices and their reflections, including my reflection, since I, as a Chinese student and an insider living in their community, continue to have similar experiences to these Chinese participants.
CHAPTER FIVE
CHINESE STUDENTS’ EVERYDAY COMMUNICATION INSIDE UNIVERSITY

5.1. Introduction
In this chapter I start from Chinese students’ academic challenges encountered in their institution. Then I focus on their impressions of the first English language class and the first professional class when they just enter their university. Next I concentrate on their learning so as to reveal their communication inside university. I focus on Chinese students’ learning events such as class communication, assignment writing, examinations, and English language learning and communication competence. Through my exploration of these everyday events, I hope to illuminate how Chinese students undertake their academic learning in university. Chinese students’ identity work is supposed to be under construction in their communication inside university.

5.2. Entering University Space
As I mentioned before, space is not just an abstract concept; rather, it is made up with various concrete, specific and human places (Barker 2008), and it is considered ‘as the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions’ (Massey 2005, 9). Massey’s ‘interactions’ can refer to Chinese students’ communication practices in their lived spaces. When Chinese students first enter their university, of course it is viewed as a strange space. In their interactions with the Others, including with their self, they are supposed to build up interrelations with their self and the Others, which in essence is the way their identity work is expressed.

According to Barker (2008, 374), ‘human interaction is situated in particular spaces that have a variety of social meanings.’ This means that the spaces of communication practices have diverse social meanings for those people with different social and cultural backgrounds. When Chinese students just enter University X, given that their own space has not been established, usually they are not sure about the ruling relations in this new institution. It is like the Chinese saying ‘Wanshi Kaitounan’ (it is the first step that is troublesome). However, Chinese students’ lived experiences are still believed to help them perceive and learn their new lived space, including all those relations that are ruling in their university.

5.2.1. Encountering challenges in university
Chinese students’ priority is to undertake their academic learning in university. In this interview, Alex and Baixue described the challenges faced in their academic learning.

When I first come here, the main problem is in the academic field. ... For instance, in my TESOL course there are 12 to 15 papers to write every term. ... I feel very difficult at the beginning. I don’t know how to look for the materials and how to write a paper. I also do not know the Harvard reference system and other stuff. (Alex)

In the first week after my first lesson I even had an idea to die. Really it’s like that. (Baixue)

These challenges occurred early in Alex’s and Baixue’s university life. Given the change of their lived space and the different teaching and learning models in China and Australia, it is anticipated that Chinese students will encounter more challenges in their academic life.
At the early stage in Australia, when Chinese students are just living in a transition period, some challenges are conspicuous. English language is the most frequently mentioned issue. In fact, they have studied English for at least six years in middle school and high school in China. They had passed English language examinations like IELTS before they came to Australia. Yet, when entering a new space, ‘it is logical that language presents the largest social barrier for individuals to interact’ (Ituarte and Davies 2007, 87). In my interviews, these participants admitted that one of the biggest challenges comes from their insufficient English language proficiency. For example, Ivy, Baixue, Jordan and Shao talked about stress that is felt when attempting to use English functionally.

When I first come here, I do not understand anything. … The main problem is language. … They speak too fast. If they have accents, I cannot understand them at all. (Ivy)

The main difficulty is language. After all, English is my second language. (Baixue)

I cannot pass the language course, and it is very tired to do my language course. Finally I passed it but I felt too tired. (Jordan)

I have difficulties in English language. … Even if you achieve a high score in IELTS, when you communicate, you do not know where they come from. Perhaps they come from India or other countries. Whether you can understand their English is another question. (Shao)

English language brings other problems to Chinese students such as lack of communication confidence in everyday life. For instance, Shao admitted that he often felt panic and was anxious about his communication at the early stage because of English. He also assumed that this feeling is common for other Chinese students.

Yes, undoubtedly we have fear in communication. … At the beginning, we may sweat no matter with whom we communicate. It is the same to all of us. We feel very anxious. (Shao)

According to Ryan (2005b, 149), most international students are likely to experience three levels of shock: ‘culture shock, language shock and academic shock’ at the beginning of international life. Chinese students’ English language shock is one of their challenges when they initially enter their new space. However, we cannot simply blame their low level of English language proficiency.

Firstly, language is a social product and the meaning of words is not fixed at all. The meaning of words may vary across context and this is tied to cultural sites as well as to ‘negotiation and social interactions’ (Gee 2008, 10). In other words, English language is not just a sign for Chinese students’ communication, and the meaning of words is not as simple as what they learned previously. Located in a host cultural context, Chinese students’ lack of understanding of social contacts and their university constitutes a challenge in their communication practices.

Secondly, these students’ English learning is under the influence of Chinese language teaching and learning approach. Their English language learning, often conducted in an examination-oriented model, focuses on language itself with an emphasis on words and grammar rules, whilst ignoring the social contexts of language use. Practically, ‘language and speech communication (as a dialogic exchange of utterance) can never
be identical’ (Bakhtin 1986b, 108). In China, English teaching and learning focuses too much on those so-called strategies of achieving higher scores in examinations but ignores Chinese students’ English communication competence. In the long run, these students just learn how to pass English examinations. However, they often lack their speech communication competence when they arrive in Australia.

Other factors are related to Chinese students’ English language challenge at the early stage of their communication in Australia. For instance, cultural differences play an influential role in Chinese students’ English language learning (Wang 2011). The different communication model of Chinese people is a barrier for these students wishing to communicate in English. Further, Chinese communication characteristics have influenced Chinese students’ English learning materials such as the content in textbooks. Consequently, what Chinese students have learned from their English textbooks in China cannot match the requirements encountered in Australia. Indeed, some students even feel that there is a gap between the textbooks learned in China and the reality encountered in Australia. When examining the reasons of Chinese students’ English difficulties, it is necessary to examine their English learning practices so as to more effectively explore other reasons for such a challenge in their host country.

5.2.2. Experiencing the first English language class

Many Chinese students usually attend their first English language class before they commence their academic learning. Their impression of the first English language class is a window into their academic learning in Australia. In my interviews, talking about the first English class, these participants admit that they are impressed by many differences. These differences gave them positive impressions and also helped them understand their new learning space. Alex recalled his first English class.

When I went to classroom, I notice that the difference is that students can sit anywhere, which is different from in China. In China, there are too many students and you cannot sit anywhere as you like. ... In class you can interrupt the lecturer at any time and this is also different from in China. (Alex)

The free atmosphere helped Alex relax. He also noticed that the relationship between lecturers and students was different from that in China. Alex recalled his impression of lecturers in his first English class.

All lecturers are very nice, and they will not give you a long face. You can ask them any questions such as learning and everyday life. ... I do not know how to write and the lecturer advises me how to write and how to revise after class. ... My first impression is very good. (Alex)

Alex also noticed that his class size is different from that in China.

Teaching is in a small-sized class and there are not many students in class. (Alex)

The relaxing class atmosphere, the kind lecturers and the small-sized English class, etc. provided these newly-arrived students with a satisfying experience. Yet, their first English class is not easy, and they encountered many difficulties that caused some stress. For instance, Jordan recalled his difficulty in his first English class.

I was completely puzzled since they all spoke English and nobody spoke Chinese. ... I couldn’t communicate with them. (Jordan)
However, not every participant encounters so many difficulties in the first English language class. For instance, Baixue admitted that her first English class was not as difficult as she had expected.

I could understand the lecturer. Really, I could understand him. I felt strange as many people had told me that I might not understand the lecturer in the first class or I needed to record the lecturer’s words. However, after my first class, I felt it is not so difficult. (Baixue)

Although Baixue had a good understanding of her lecturer, she admitted that she did not get herself involved in any communication activities in her first English class. She felt that it was difficult to communicate at the beginning of her English course. The difficulty did not come from her capacity to use the English language but from her lack of familiarity with those around her and even her personality.

At the beginning I completely closed myself in class. ... Just like what my classmate said, ‘you are the quietest student in class, so you are ignored by others’. ... Maybe it’s because I was sick then. ... Maybe it was caused by my personality. If I am not familiar with others in a new place, I will not speak freely. (Baixue)

It should be noted that Chinese communication characteristics may play a negative role in Chinese students’ communication practices. When Chinese students leave their lived space dominated by Confucianism and other Chinese cultural patterns and move into their new space, their Chinese ‘cultural models’ (Gee 2008, 104) cannot change automatically, since cultural models usually are invisible and unnoticeable. Chinese students still live in previous authoritative discourse. To solve English communication problem, Chinese students need to start their transition in a new space.

Baixue considered that it was the nature of personality that forced her to close up in her English class. This experience is an example of the heavy influence of Chinese cultural patterns. In Analects, the Confucius saying ‘Nayuyan Er Minyushi’ (reserved in speech, expeditious in action) advises Chinese people not to speak too much but to focus more on practices. From Baixue’s experience, it can be seen that Confucius thought, as a cultural and/or ideological force and a form of ruling relation mediating some Chinese students’ everyday life, plays an influential role when they just come to Australia. It is an example to see that Chinese students have their culturally-based behaviour and attitudes (Jiang et al. 2010). Yet, in such a communication context, the influence is negative and it even becomes an obstacle in their academic learning.

Some participants admitted that their first English language class was a stimulant in everyday life. By attending their English language class, they began to get rid of some negative emotions and move to a more positive mind-set. For instance, Ivy explained that her first English language class helped her get along with others.

I feel lonely at home, but when I come to school, I can see many people like lecturers and students. .... I get to know friends from other countries. ... I feel curious about everything. ... I want to try, to contact and to learn. I feel that I am not alone and try to make more friends. .... I would like to learn backgrounds, cultures and traditions of those international students from Korean, Japan, Sri Lanka and India. (Ivy)

By attending English language class, Ivy started to overcome the depression caused
by abrupt changes in her life. More generally, some participants regarded English language class as an effective way to understand others and learn about their new lived space, so they were willing to communicate and accept new things.

I was excited since it was my first class. I was also a bit nervous as my English is not so good. Later I found that the lecturer is kinder than Chinese lecturer. He can use the simplest words to communicate and he is patient. His teaching is interesting and he draws our attention to study. ... The academic level is clearly divided and we are placed at the same level, so it is easy for us to communicate. (Jordan)

The first class surprised me as there were only three students from other countries, a Pakistanis student, a Vietnamese student and a Japanese student. Other 24 students were Chinese. ... Perhaps it is because Melbourne is the second largest city in Australia, and it is one of the most livable places in the world. ... I have never expected that there are so many Chinese students in my first class. (Shao)

These participants compared their English learning to their previous English learning in China. Generally they feel satisfied with their first English language class in terms of the relaxing learning atmosphere, patient lecturers, small-sized language class and the different teaching model. Although their conclusions are only based on their first impressions, it is meaningful for English language teachers, including those English teachers in China, to reflect on issues in English teaching such as class atmosphere, teacher-student relationship and teacher’s professional identity in a multicultural teaching and learning context. More discussions are conducted in Chapter Eleven.

5.2.3. Experiencing the first professional class
Apart from their first English language class, Chinese students talked about their first professional class in University X (some participants did not do an English course but started from professional course in University X). For instance, Baixue talked about her first Nursing class in University X. Since she had worked as a nurse in China before coming to Australia, she assumed that her first professional class would be easy. Yet, in my interview she admitted that she became confused after the first week.

I was fine in the first professional class ... and I felt easy. ... But next Monday in the first class of another unit I couldn’t catch up with the lecturer. ... I was crazy. In the afternoon there was a tutorial and I began to learn about patients and basic physical conditions of patients. ... I couldn’t understand why the lecturer explained in that way. ... I was confused after the first week. (Baixue)

From Baixue’s story, it can be seen that, firstly, Chinese students’ difficulty in their professional course is not just a matter of English language. Indeed, Baixue has already completed her English language course in Australia, and thus theoretically she should have already achieved English proficiency to cope with professional course. Nevertheless, she is puzzled about her professional course. Hence I argue that this is a matter of their professional learning. I admit that it is specific to the services provided by nurses in different countries, since nursing practices may differ in different cultures and the confusions can originate from these differences.

Secondly, Chinese students’ challenges were not confined to their transition and the use of English language at this stage. Their academic transition was another challenge for them as well. For example, Baixue felt uneasy in her professional course, in spite of her previous learning and working experience as a nurse in China. She felt the gap between her previous academic learning in China and her academic learning in
Australia. Her sense of uneasiness is not only a result of the change of her lived space but also a result of her professional identity crisis.

In conclusion, by exploring these participants’ lived experience at their early stage of studying in University X, especially in their first English language class and their first professional class, I discussed English language challenge and academic challenge that Chinese students had encountered in their new institution. These difficulties in essence were caused by the change of their discourses, which brings identity crisis to them. These challenges on the one hand demonstrate their difficulties in everyday life; on the other hand, they are representations of cultural and communication conflicts.

Also, I discussed Chinese students’ English difficulty in their communication. It is not just a matter of English language, and thus I cannot simply suggest that these students do not have a good command of English. Conversely, their comparisons of English language learning in Australia and in China raise concerns for English teaching practitioners and English teachers in China (including me). Chinese students’ English difficulties were caused by other factors as well such as the influence of Chinese culture and Chinese communication characteristics. Their mode of English learning and learning materials in China also influence their communication in Australia.

5.3. Learning as Communication
This section is focused on Chinese students’ learning events in university, that is, class communication, assignment writing, examinations and English language learning and communication competence. These everyday events are interrelated with Chinese students’ university life. In discussing these events, they represent Chinese students’ everyday life in university and reveal their identity work in Australia.

5.3.1. Class communication
Multiculturalism and intercultural communication are defining features of the campus life in today’s Australian universities. Culturally diverse classrooms provide a host of opportunities to ‘promote critical thinking and intercultural communication skills for both international students and local students’ (Ryan and Hellmundt 2005, 16). As I reviewed in Chapter Two, Chinese students are usually viewed as silent students in class communication. However, when located in a multicultural context, are Chinese students still labeled as silent students? If this is so, why do they keep silent? What difficulties are likely to make them keep silent in class communication? These questions were asked in my interviews.

It should be clarified that not all Chinese students are likely to keep silent in class communication. In my interviews, at least three participants noted that they and other Chinese students were indeed active participants in class communication.

Compared to other Chinese students, I am a bit active. We often discuss topics in class. … We also select one or two students from such Eastern countries as Japan, Korea and Malaysia to do a presentation. I will take the first to talk about the teaching model in China. (Alex)

Two Chinese students in my class … like to speak, even if they understand a bit. (Baixue)

If I understand that section, I will be very active. There are many active Guilao (Guilao is used by Chinese to refer to Australians, and in this thesis there is not any discrimination in this word), but Chinese students usually are not active. If I do not understand, or if I am not interested in it, I will
not be active. … There are four Chinese students in my class. … One of them is active since his English is very good. Another one is not very active. Another one is like me. … If we know what the lecturer is talking about, we will be very active. (Jordan)

It can be seen that in their class communication Chinese students are not as passive as suggested in some of the previous literature. Here then is some evidence to refute the stereotype that Chinese students are silent and passive learners. Conversely, if they can, they would like to communicate and express their opinions actively in class.

However, some participants admitted that they are not so active in class.

Not many to speak, even if I know something. In most cases I would like to listen to others. (Ivy)

I am one of the quiet students in class. … I just sit down and listen to the lecturer. … Yes, my performance is like a traditional Chinese student’s learning model. Sometimes I ask questions, attend discussions and present, but it is not many. (Rock)

Several participants discussed their reasons being silent during class communication.

First, Chinese students do not have a clear study purpose since it is their families that ask them to study here. … The second reason is that they do not have the ability. … They just eat, sleep and watch TV series. … They watch Hong Kong and Cantonese programs. … They don’t practice English. Clearly, one reason is that they have no target. Another reason is they do not have the ability. As a result, they cannot successfully communicate with lecturers. (Alex)

My study is not good and I don’t know how to speak. … The psychological factor is just a small part. If I know it, I will speak it out. … In fact, I do not understand that question. (Baixue)

The first reason is that I am not sure whether what I want to say is exactly what the lecturer wants. I am not sure whether I will be laughed at if I speak it out. If I answer in English, I need to think about the question for a long time to avoid errors. As such, I would rather keep silent. … The essential reason is English language. If my English was as good as those people who stay here for seven or eight years, not to mention those local people, perhaps I would be more active to try a different life and contact Guilao and integrate into their life. (Ivy)

There is a bit worry and I am afraid to communicate. Theoretically, communication can obtain more information. … But I am not sure what information I will get and what kind of people I may meet, so I close myself in a small space. (Rock)

Based on these participants’ responses, I then summarise why Chinese students would like to keep silent in class communication. Firstly, English language proficiency and English communication competence influence Chinese students’ class performances. Without a good command of English language and communication competence, they often need a long time to prepare to speak publically, and sometimes they are not able to catch up with others in class. Therefore, to outsiders, they are simply regarded as silent students.

Secondly, Chinese students often have a sense of fear in class communication. Their fear originates from their lack of communication competency and their lack of understanding of Australian society and culture. It is a vicious cycle of their English communication practices in Australia. That is, the less they communicate, the less they learn about Australia, and the less they communicate with others again. Their
internal fear to some extent becomes burden in class communication. Some Chinese students simply choose to avoid communication with others, but they may lose their interest in class communication and academic learning.

Thirdly, Chinese students’ academic learning, especially professional learning, is still difficult for them. Some Chinese students feel puzzled about how to timely respond to lecturers and peers in class. Given that professional learning is not just a matter of English language, it is difficult to catch up with lecturers and peers in professional courses. They would choose to keep silent and/or they would try to catch up lecturers in other feasible ways such as listening to class recordings or discussing with other top Chinese students after class. For some Chinese students, it is a passive method of study. However, it is still possible for them to catch up.

Fourthly, Mianzi (face) plays a negative role in Chinese students’ academic learning and class communication. Some students worry about losing Mianzi, and they keep reserved in spite of the importance of class communication. It is another example of the negative influence of Chinese culture upon Chinese students. These students are mostly living in their primary Discourse, and they are not used to their secondary Discourse. Their class communication, such as speaking out uncertain opinions, is not regarded as a positive attempt to explore possible solutions and a part of contribution to their class. In contrast, they worry that inappropriate opinions may lose their face and even be laughed at. It is not only a difference between Chinese students’ first Discourses and secondary Discourses but also an example to show that they have not achieved their new identity at this stage. That is, their communication practices are still under the influence of Chinese cultural patterns discussed in Chapter Three.

Finally, the mode of teaching and learning in Chinese education influences Chinese students’ class communication. ‘In modern China, the education system has lost its ability to provide the dialogic opportunity’ (Hammond and Gao 2002, 228). A teacher is often regarded as an authority, and those students believe they should not challenge their teacher. Chinese students feel that to speak with a different voice is unnecessary and dangerous, and they prefer to be a quiet and ‘good’ student. The examination-oriented model of teaching and learning makes Chinese students assume that the lecturers are protagonists (assessors) in their academic learning. Hence, they passively listen to lecturers and do not get themselves involved in class communication.

Other opinions concerning Chinese students’ class communication arose during the interviews. First of all, the importance of Chinese students’ agency in their class communication and identity transformation should be mentioned. For instance, Alex believed that Chinese students’ silence is due to the difficulty to adapt to the different learning models. When these Chinese students enter their Australian university, their understanding of and adherence to certain ideologies do not change easily.

To an international student studying in the Westernized cultural context, he/she should gradually change his/her ideology. I think its influence upon students should not exist after more than half a year. (Alex)

Here Alex does not explain his understanding of ideology, but ideology, at least, can be understood as a set of cultural models. Ideology ‘is conceived as a practice that is lived and transforms the material world’ (Barker 2008, 63), and it ‘constitutes the
world views by which people live and experience their lives’ (Barker 2008, 64). More importantly, it is a form of culture represented through everyday performances.

Alex implies the importance of agency in Chinese students’ communication practices, and he notes that Chinese students need to get rid of the influence of their previous Chinese ideology when they live in a new situational space. Brought up in Chinese culture and ideology, it is difficult for Chinese students to eliminate the influence of Chinese ideology, although ‘human beings are active agents’ (Wotherspoon 2004, 7). Their acquisition of new ideology is achieved through their everyday practices, since ideology is not occupied directly – one acquires the discursive content associated with this or that ideology. Texts mediate the transmission of ideology as well, and ideology thus can be also reproduced through texts and talk as oral texts. One’s agency is ‘the socially constructed capacity to act’ (Barker 2008, 236). It is possible to help Chinese students act properly under the influence of their new ideology, although how to help them change is another challenge.

Chinese students’ silence is just one side of their class communication. Actually, they have a strong desire to communicate and wish that they are able to communicate like local students one day. For instance, Baixue admitted that she has started to change so as to achieve this.

In the first five weeks I nearly did not talk except for in group activities. ... I feel that my English is not good and I feel inferior. In the next five weeks I adjusted myself and felt a bit better. (Baixue)

Ivy also admitted that she has a strong desire to communicate in class, since she had realized that class communication is beneficial for her.

Interviewer: If others are very active, do you admire them?
Interviewee: Honestly, I admire their courage. They don’t fear. They speak what they want to say, even though their English is not so good and what they speak may not be right. ... Yes, I am eager to be recognised in class communication. (Ivy)

Chinese students’ strong desire to be recognised in class communication has already been discussed in other studies. According to Ryan (2005a, 93), international students reported that ‘they felt under-valued and misunderstood. They wanted to learn new skills, to demonstrate their experience and expertise, and to speak up and participate in class, but needed help to do so.’ It should be appreciated if lecturers can understand this and help international students smoothly transfer to their new academic context in international education practice.

In conclusion, Chinese students realise the importance of their class communication, although some of them often do not communicate. Their difficulties in class communication are brought about by lack of English communication competence and confidence, insufficient professional proficiency and negative influences of Chinese culture such as the risk of losing Mianzi. One positive signal is that Chinese students usually have a strong desire to communicate in spite of their silence. Immersed in Chinese education cultural context for a long time, Chinese students need to transit to new learning space and re-consider the relationships between teachers and students, and between an authority and learners in class communication.

Chinese ideology, as a form of culture or a set of cultural models, functions as a force
in communication practices of Chinese students. The ideological transition is difficult and it is a rather long process, since the ideology has been embedded into their Chinese identity and also represented in their everyday practices. In order to achieve such a transition, Chinese students need to immerse themselves in their host culture or even become ‘bicultural’ (Byram 2003, 50). Only then can they communicate with others effectively and achieve a new identity.

5.3.2. Assignment writing
Chinese students’ assignment writing is often regarded as one of their most important everyday events in their university life. Writing in essence is a form of speech communication, since it is ‘speech without an interlocutor, addressed to an absent or an imaginary person or to no one in particular’ (Vygotsky 1989, 181). Yet, Vygotsky (1989, 180) argued that ‘written speech is a separate linguistics function, differing from oral speech in both structure and mode of functioning.’ In this research project, I interview Chinese students to capture the challenges they faced in assignment writing.

If it is difficult for Chinese students to communicate in spoken English, their English written communication is supposed to be difficult as well. Most participants agree that their assignment writing is too difficult to achieve a good score.

The variations of my language and sentences are not enough, which I think is a weak point. (Alex)

To me, writing makes me feel headache. ... I need a very long time to prepare. Normally ... I need two or three weeks or even longer time to prepare. (Rock)

There are English language problems. ... I can write, but I write very slowly. (Jordan)

Practically writing is a higher language requirement, since ‘we are obliged to use many more words, and to use them more exactly’ (Vygotsky 1989, 242). For instance, Chinese students report that their vocabulary is a problem in assignment writing.

Alex compared his English vocabulary to his Australian classmates’ vocabulary, and then he believed that his limited vocabulary is one of the reasons why he cannot achieve a High Distinction (HD) in his assessment task.

I never feel that my vocabulary is as good as the local students’. I read assignments written by local students, and their vocabulary is much better. It makes me feel difficult to get a HD in my units. In the past three terms I just got two HDs. Most of them are C. (Alex)

Malu also admitted that her writing is weak in the choice of English words. She is not satisfied with her written communication since she has a limited vocabulary.

It is not nice to read my writing. ... Sometimes I just use limited words such as ‘increase’ and ‘decrease’ in the business field, and I use these words again and again. In fact, the score of my writing is good, but I do not feel my writing is good. (Malu)

More difficulties in Chinese students’ written communication were reported. For example, Shao felt that the use of conjunctions is a problem in his English writing.

You cannot use ‘for example’ in your whole paper in examination. I mean the conjunctions. ... Yes, it is a language issue. (Shao)
Shao realised that writing competence is connected to everyday practices, identity and lived experiences in Australia.

You must connect your writing to your life. If you cannot connect it to your real life, your writing may not be understood. (Shao)

The format of assignment writing is also difficult for Shao. He reported that Chinese students are not trained in this field in China. However, he agreed that the detailed requirements in writing format in Australia are helpful in the long run.

As for writing format ... the format in the Western countries is different. ... Each unit has specific requirements such as font, word size and space, of course, including word length. ... These formats make readers feel comfortable ... once we accept these standards in writing. The barrier that we may encounter is that we have not got used to these. ... It is good to have these standards, since writing is not for yourself but for others. (Shao)

Ivy and Baixue mentioned their writing difficulties. One concerned a lack of critical discernment of texts, and the other poor research ability. Baixue felt that she was weak in critical ability, and she attributed this to her lack of training in China.

More or less I have difficulties ... mainly in my research. ... Now the problem is that I have to write in English and I need to do the research, paraphrase and write in English. ... It is related to English language. ... Maybe it is related to too many terminologies. ... I find that my vocabulary is too limited. (Ivy)

Yes, it is critical thinking. I am not able to do that. In China teaching is a duck-crammed model. You just accept what lecturers teach to you, and you don’t need to think about it. Here it is different. ... I must always think about why it is like this and why it is not like that. (Baixue)

Alex indicated that assignment writing is complex for Chinese students, since many elements are involved in written communication.

The more important is that you need a broader vision and a right method to think critically. ... Writing is not only a matter of vocabulary but a comprehensive matter. ... Language is just a medium. (Alex)

Of the key challenges raised by these Chinese participants, one is caused by Chinese students’ level of proficiency in the use of English language; another is related to their identity, and the third is a consequence of lack of social contacts in Australia.

Chinese students’ written communication difficulties are concerned with their English proficiency. In particular, their written competence is related to the English teaching and learning model in China. As mentioned by Baixue, English teaching in China is often conducted in a duck-crammed examination-oriented way. Chinese students are just expected to passively follow their teachers, and they do not need to think about their writing, including how to express themselves. Writing does not need to include their opinions but simply involves putting some English sentences together within a fixed format. Being immersed in such a learning model, it is understandable why Chinese students will encounter their writing difficulties in Australia. They also lack critical thinking ability to organise their writing, as they are not trained in this field.
Chinese students’ written difficulty is related to their identity. Influenced by Chinese culture and ideology, Chinese students have already achieved a sense of their primary identity. Their immersion in Chinese culture has led to the fact that they may have not fulfilled their identity transformation and established an Other in mind in English written communication. It is difficult for them to establish a dialogic relationship between their self and the Other. They also cannot set up interactions with Australian readers, although writing itself is ‘essentially dialogic’ (Smith 1999, 136). Without a dialogic awareness, Chinese students cannot do well in written communication.

Chinese students’ written challenges appear to be related to lack of social contacts in Australia. ‘All writing is located within the wider socio-political context’ (Clark and Ivanič 1997, 20); without enough social contacts, Chinese students cannot develop their perception of their new lived space. Written communication therefore is only based on their conceived space and perceived space, but not on their practices in lived space. Yet, ‘writing only becomes meaningful in social interaction, in discussion, thinking, and collaboration with others’ (Brooke 1991, vii). Without adequate social contacts in lived space, such students cannot achieve good written communication.

Plagiarism is another English writing issue that I discussed with these participants in my interviews. ‘All words (utterance, speech, and literary words) except my own are the other’s words. I live in a world of other’s words’ (Bakhtin 1986a, 143), so it is usually difficult to identify plagiarism in writing practice.
Chinese students agreed that plagiarism was offensive and unacceptable. They tried to avoid copying, or, at least, being caught plagiarising in written communication. They did not deny that some Chinese students purchased and sold written assignments. For instance, Ivy mentioned that such deals existed not only among Chinese students but also amongst the general population of students in the university.

Interviewer: Has anyone plagiarised in assignment writing?
Interviewee: Nearly not. Here is a policy, and plagiarism is very serious. We dare not do that and there should be no copying. ... It is possible to spend money buying other’s writing since many advertisements are put up on campus. They are not just for Chinese students. Maybe those students from other countries also do this ... and even local students. (Ivy)

Malu used a Chinese word ‘Xianghu Cankao’ (mutual references) to imply Chinese students’ particular way of plagiarism in assignment writing. It is difficult to define ‘Xianghu Cankao’ and translate it into English accurately since it is regarded as a form of learning model in Chinese education practice. In Chinese students’ Xianghu Cankao, they usually first read someone else’s work and then copy and/or paraphrase a part of it, or at least, imitate others’ work, sometimes with certain creativity and innovation but without any acknowledgments. In doing so, they intentionally revise some words in original works so as to avoid a plagiarism penalty. Strictly speaking, it is plagiarism, but it is difficult to identify.

Honestly there are many Xianghu Cankao in assignment writing, as there is only one assignment for over two hundred students. We always can find good friends in class for help. At least we can discuss together, and if we feel that there is no problem in the general direction, we pass. (Malu)

To sum up, Chinese students’ assignment writing is an important part of their written communication. Their English language proficiency, the influence of Chinese culture, their identity and everyday lived experiences in China and Australia all are involved in their writing practice. Without enough social contacts in their lived space, without a good command of their English language, Chinese students’ written communication is difficult. Plagiarism and secret writing deals exist at the university amongst Chinese students and in the general population. To help solve this issue amongst the Chinese population, a greater emphasis needs to be placed on these students’ English written communication challenges.

5.3.3. Examinations
Sitting examinations is an unavoidable task in Chinese students’ academic learning. Chinese students are generally very concerned about their examinations, since those examinations for them are far more than a form of academic communication. The scores of examinations are critical for many reasons and especially because the results are conveyed to others, including their parents in China.

Chinese students reveal different attitudes to examinations when they compare their attitudes to that of Australian students. Influenced by their parents and Chinese culture, Chinese students regard examinations as a way to show their academic ability and a representation of their institutional identity. Today many people agree that the examination system in Chinese education practice can pave the way to gain face for family and ancestors, and ‘the higher the level of the examination that students can pass, the higher social values they are conceptualised to have and the more respect that they will gain from society’ (Hui 2005, 30). Perhaps this is the initial motivation
that drives Chinese students to pay so much attention to their examinations.

Personally it is mainly influenced by Chinese stern education. In China, you only can prove your ability by passing examinations. In fact, it should not be in this way. (Baixue)

Chinese students’ attitude to examinations is also related to their respect for Chinese parents. Some participants explained that their Chinese parents paid the tuition for their course, and consequently these students were concerned about examinations, since the results are regarded as a form of reward to their parents. Yet, they admitted that Australian students are not like this.

I feel that the local students do not expect too much from their examinations. They may feel that part-time work is more important than study. ... If they fail examinations because of their part-time, they can learn again because people here are not like Chinese people. (Baixue)

Baixue found that Australian students were not so concerned about their examinations in university, since they do not need to pay tuition fees upfront. Under the Australian Government’s Higher Education Contribution Scheme – HECS (1969), students do not pay full university fees until they are earning a significant salary or wage. Baixue felt that this arrangement led to less stress on both Australian students and parents.

Baixue noted that in University X Chinese students were more capable than those non-Asian students in undertaking examinations. According to Baixue, many Chinese students still used their Chinese learning model to do their course in Australia. For example, she admitted that memorisation still plays an important role in Chinese students’ examination preparation.

I had felt those active Guilao would achieve a high score, but in fact they did not. Maybe they are active in class and they have understood the lecturer, but they do not review and preview. They are not like us. We read, review, memorise, and we can find those regularities. Chinese students can grasp the lecturer’s key points. ... Sometimes we find examination techniques, but we are not good at learning what lecturers have told. (Baixue)

Baixue also admitted that memorisation was very important in her own examination preparation. She hoped to memorise more for her examinations, but she admitted that it is difficult, since now Australian lecturers do not tell her the so-called potential key points that will be covered in examinations, which is not like examination preparation in China. This is an example to see that Chinese students ‘are very achievement oriented and alert to cues from their lecturers and from the assessment system itself as to what is needed to succeed in a particular course’ (Biggs and Watkins 1996, 282). Yet, given this strategy some Chinese students are able to do better in examinations.

I will think about what may be tested in examinations and then work on these points. ... Now the lecturer talks about this and that, but what are the key points? The lecturer does not tell me, so I am not confident. ... In a real examination I need to memorise all of them and write them down in English, so I feel it very difficult. (Baixue)

In China, examination score is regarded as a representation of a student’s identity. This is the reason why the influence of Chinese learning model still exists, although the examination-oriented/achievement-oriented education model has been criticised a lot in China. In Australia, this Chinese-style education model has influenced many
Chinese students’ attitude to examinations. Chinese students are concerned so much about their examination scores; but they often ignore academic learning itself. This kind of success does not bring any changes at all, since Chinese students do not learn how to think, how to express themselves and how to be creative in learning.

To conclude, Chinese students’ learning model and their attitude to examinations are influenced by Chinese teaching and learning model and previous education practice in China. In their previous education, Chinese students are often required to memorise, and their learning evaluation is usually done by all kinds of examinations. Chinese students are ‘rarely allowed to interact with one another or with the teacher in the classroom’ (Hammond and Gao 2002, 232), which is the best reason why in Australia Chinese students are still concerned so much about examinations. To achieve a good score, they try to take a short-cut and even use tricks such as observing lecturers’ cues about what might be included in a forthcoming examination and memorising those so-called key points before examinations. Such a learning attitude needs to be corrected since this model cannot bring significant progress.

Influenced by Chinese culture, Chinese people are ranked within a range of different hierarchies. Chinese students, although they are located in Australia, also would like to use examination score as a status indicator whilst ignoring the potential benefits of interactive thinking and creation. The examination score for them is viewed as a direct representation of their institutional identity. This is the reason why they are concerned so much about their examinations, including assignments, as the score of assignments...
is often a part of their course score. It can be seen that Chinese culture has influenced
Chinese students’ identity work; Chinese students’ identity work has influenced their
learning and attitudes to examinations. To achieve identity transition, it is necessary
for Chinese students to alter their learning model and attitude to examinations. It is
also a possible solution to help them construct their identity in Australia.

5.3.4. English language and communication competence

Language is ‘an indispensable medium for communication, for negotiating human
relationships, for forming a social identity …’ (Doecke and Parr 2011, 8). The issue of
English language is mentioned frequently by Chinese students in my interviews. In
Australia, English language is supposed to be used in Chinese students’ everyday
communication, but the effectiveness of their English communication is not known.
Also, how Chinese students perceive their English language learning in Australia is an
interesting topic. In this section, Chinese students discussed their English learning
experiences in Australia, and some issues of English teaching and learning in the
Chinese cultural context were also raised.

First, Chinese students regard English learning in Australia as being closely related to
their everyday life; by contrast, in China those English learning materials such as
English textbooks are far away from their everyday life. Alex recalled his English
learning experience in his Chinese university and pointed out that the content in those
English textbooks was just selected from some literature works and the language is
not connected to the real life; however, in Australia he noticed that English teaching
and learning often focuses on everyday experiences.

Generally, China’s English education can meet the needs of students’ overseas study. … The
problem is that the content and words selected from literature works cannot be used in everyday
life. When choosing a textbook, each university needs to think about it. (Alex)

Alex also claimed that the model of English teaching in China is different from the
model in Australia.

The first difference is more interactions in class here. In China … it is a kind of duck-crammed
teaching model. … Here English teaching focuses more on practices. (Alex)

Malu and Shao also criticised that the model of English teaching in China, since it is
not related to the everyday life. They emphasised the interconnection between English
teaching and learners’ everyday practices. From Malu’s story, we see that in China
English teaching is not connected to everyday life yet. As such, some Chinese
students still do not know how to use English to communicate, even after they have
learned English for years.

Chinese students cannot learn native English from their textbooks. Once my landlord helped his
child with homework … the word should be ‘Dunxia’ (crouch). My landlord demonstrated it
before the child with his body language and asked the child to guess the word. … I understood
the landlord and the Chinese word he wanted to say, but I did not know ‘Dunxia’ in English. … In
China, I learned ‘Zuoxia’ (sit), ‘Zhanzhe’ (stand) and ‘Tangxia’ (lie), but I did not learn ‘Dunxia’.
Perhaps it is the problem of Chinese English education. I asked those top Chinese students how
to say ‘Dunxia’, but nobody knew. … Yes, it is not related to our everyday life. (Malu)

Shao complained that English teaching in China is concerned too much about
language grammar, so Chinese students often lack communication skills.

I feel what local people concern is not grammar. ... There are too many restrictions in English education in China. ... Yes, in China English teaching is not connected to the real life. It is absolutely disconnected. ... Chinese students also lack communication skills. (Shao)

Figure 5.3: a new meaning of ‘breakfast’, Photo by Bin Ai
It is difficult for Chinese students to understand ‘breakfast’, if they do not know the culture. Without a cultural foundation Chinese students encounter many challenges in Australia.

Shao believed that Chinese students’ English learning model plays a negative role in their English learning practice, after Chinese students come to Australia. He admitted that some Chinese students can handle their daily communication in English, but they still have difficulty when delivering a professional speech even after they pass English language course in Australia.

Now their English proficiency is at different levels, and their basic communication competency is fine. However ... if you ask them to deliver a professional speech, it is hard to them. (Shao)

According to these responses, in China the selected English teaching materials are not related to everyday life; rather, the language is selected from the works of literature. The language in English textbooks is written in ‘artistic’ (Bakhtin 1981b, 260) genres.
In their learning of English language, Chinese students are mostly immersed in these artistic or literary genres; they cannot get access to the everyday English and now have difficulties in communication.

Other factors that may bring English communication difficulties were discussed in the interviews. Firstly, one’s personality is believed to be connected to communication competence. Shao separated communication competence from English proficiency, as it is not only determined by English proficiency but also related to personality.

Some students, perhaps influenced by family, are rational in socializing, but some are not good at socializing. Some students may have a strong personality and put themselves in a core position. Perhaps they do not pay any attention to others’ psychological feeling, and this will bring about contradictions. (Shao)

Secondly, the scores of English examinations of Chinese students are not considered to be connected to communication competence in everyday life. Baixue realised that an English examination score does not equate to communication competence at all.

Even if you had passed language test, even if you had got 7 or 8 in an IELTS exam, you would find that language still has a large gap when you live here. You will find that your language always cannot be as good as local people. ... You have done language course here, but it does not mean that you have no problems when you live here, even after you pass examinations. (Baixue)

Baixue admitted that she has communication difficulties, although she passed her English language course. Although she had passed English language examinations and even achieved high scores, she still felt that she is not capable enough in everyday communication. She concluded that this is the reason why she fails to communicate effectively with local people.

In local people’s language they like to use acronyms, abbreviations, simple-reading elicitations. For instance, they say breakfast as ‘brekky’, and it is quite different. ... It is a real communication problem, and many people do not want to communicate. Perhaps language learning is a process. ... After you have endured a shy and immature stage, after you have achieved effective communication with them, you will feel it easy. (Baixue)

Baixue thought that one solution to solving communication difficulty would be for Chinese students to enter local people’s everyday lives in order to achieve a good understanding of their language and culture, rather than simply learning English in a language course. As an English language learner, I agree with her, since ‘the genesis of language is tied to societies, to their histories, and not to dramatised moments of the employment of words’ (Lefebvre 2004, 49). Language is a social sign, and its meaning intrinsically involves social practices. Chinese students need to participate in more communication practices so as to learn English language in different social practices.

Thirdly, the insufficient communication competence of Chinese students is caused by their lack of everyday practices. Chinese students feel that English language is a barrier to enter their secondary Discourses, and their everyday communication is often restricted in a Chinese circle of friends and colleagues. Jordan believed his inadequate proficiency in using English restricted his communication circle and his social networking, which in turn affects his identity work in Australia.
It is because of poor English proficiency, and perhaps it is a common characteristic of Chinese student. We normally will not take the initiative to contact Guilao. ... In English language class, there were not local students when we came. ... Chinese students stay with Chinese students. ... My English is not good, so I cannot have my communication circle here. (Jordan)

The English communication difficulty of Chinese students is partially caused by Chinese communication philosophies reviewed in Chapter Three. Influenced by the dominant Chinese communication culture such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, Chinese students usually prefer to keep silent for the sake of Mianzi, and so avoid offending and arguing for harmony. Many sayings in Chinese language such as ‘Huocong Kouchu’ (one’s troubles are caused by his tongue), ‘Yanduo Bishi’ (one is bound to have a slip of the tongue if he talks too much), and ‘Chenmo Shijin’ (silence is golden) advise people to keep quiet. Of course, essentially Chinese sayings should be thought as a form of representation of Chinese traditional culture. Influenced by these sayings and Chinese communication characteristics, Chinese students usually prefer to avoid language communication. In doing so, they lose their opportunities to improve English communication competence as well.

Other factors also bring about some negative influences on Chinese students’ English communication. During the interviews, Chinese students complained that they needed an English-speaking context and more opportunities to communicate in English, since they do not need to use English in everyday life. For instance, Malu complained that there were too many Chinese students in her Accounting course, and that she did not have access to an English-speaking environment at all.

There are few chances to communicate in English. ... My course is Accounting. Almost all classes are lectures. ... If there are 200 students in a lecture, around 180 students are Chinese. When the lecturer is delivering in English, some students are always talking in Chinese. ... Whenever these classmates are discussing or chatting ... they speak in Chinese. I feel bored with them. (Malu)

Malu admitted that she had a strong desire to communicate in English, and she also wished to enter local people’s circle. However, it was difficult for Chinese students to achieve this, even in a small way. She blamed herself, since she had already realised the importance of communicating with local people and entering their circle, but she, including many Chinese students, has not taken any actions yet.

We do not go out but live in our own circle. ... I should get to understand the local culture ... act like local people. ... I am angry with myself ... and I have a sense to look down upon myself. I am so bad. ... Sometimes I imagine one day I will ... but this day has not come yet. (Malu)

To conclude, Chinese students’ English proficiency and their English communication competence play important roles in their everyday communication, although these students interviewed were not confident with their English proficiency. Influenced by Chinese culture and communication characteristics, they keep silent and also avoid communication. In Australia, they mostly live in a Chinese cultural and social circle, and some complain that they lack an English-speaking environment, even in academic learning; however, they still long for communicating in English so that they can enter local people’s life. Their learning model in China, their English proficiency, the negative influences of Chinese communication characteristics and their Chinese identity make them feel less than successful in their everyday communication.
Language is a product of social practices, and the study of language meaning is ‘the study of social practices’ (Gee 1992, 12); Chinese students need more social contacts in English learning. Some Chinese students like Malu realise that the difficulties are not only caused by English language but also by lack of social contacts with local community and culture. As such, ‘the teaching of foreign languages must be made relevant to social life, where people need to communicate with each other in order to set the stage for possible mutual understanding’ (Kramsch 2000, 240). When Chinese students have already appropriated English as a communication tool of their own in everyday life, it would not be impossible to help them ‘master the other languages of English that would need to survive and compete’ (Lin and Luk 2005, 95). Otherwise, in Australia Chinese students’ communication is likely to continue in a negative cycle. Without certain English communication competence as a representation of Chinese students’ identity, their identity work will be difficult, even impossible.

5.4. Conclusion
In this chapter, I discussed Chinese students’ academic challenges at the early stage of their university life and their academic learning as a form of everyday communication in university. I started from their early challenges and impressions of first English language class and first professional class. Next, to explore their academic learning in university, I discussed their academic learning as a form of everyday communication from the perspectives of class communication, assignment writing, examinations and their English language learning and communication competence. These everyday lived experiences revealed some of the realities of Chinese student’s communication in university. It was also seen that their communication practices and identity work were both influenced by Chinese cultural patterns.

The next chapter is focused on Chinese students’ interpersonal communication in their university. According to the object involved in their communication practices, I categorise Chinese students’ interpersonal communication into four sections – their lecturers, administrative staff members and librarians, Australian students and other international students. The purpose of my exploration of Chinese students’ interpersonal communication is not only to understand their communication practices in university but also to examine their identity work, since identity ‘was formed in relation to “significant others”, who mediated to the subject the values, meanings and symbols – the culture – of the worlds he/she inhabited’ (Hall 1992, 275). All these people that I categorise are regarded as ‘significant others’ for Chinese students in their university, and they are expected to help Chinese students shape their identity.
CHAPTER SIX
CHINESE STUDENTS’ INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION INSIDE UNIVERSITY

6.1. Introduction
In Chapter Five, I discussed a number of aspects of Chinese students’ communication practices in university. In the first section, I discussed their early challenges and impressions of their first English language course and first professional course. In the second section, I concentrated on their academic learning as a form of communication inside their university. I also discussed the interaction between these students’ communication practices and identity, given that they are closely connected.

Identity is ‘formed in the “interaction” between self and society’ (Hall 1992, 276). In Australia Chinese students’ identity work is supposed to exist in their interaction with others, including their interaction with their self. In this chapter, I focus on these students’ interpersonal interaction/communication practices with ‘significant others’ such as lecturers, administrative staff members and librarians, Australian students and other international students inside institution (Chinese students’ communication with other Chinese students and Chinese-Australians is discussed in Chapter Eight).

6.2. Communication with Lecturers
In this section, ‘lecturers’ refers to academic staff members in University X. Given that ‘China keeps strongly alive the tradition of respecting education and honoring the teaching profession’ (Guo 2005, 150), Chinese students are supposed to be taught to respect their lecturers, including their lecturers in Australian universities. Yet, in these Chinese students’ secondary Discourses, the notion of respect that Guo (2005) refers to is under challenge, when Chinese students enter their Australian university, since the power that the lecturers appear to have is over the final mark that they will receive. In fact, this opinion is often heard when taking to Chinese students. The lecturers’ contribution to Chinese students’ academic learning and progress must be recognised and acknowledged, but it is Chinese students’ hard work that decides the outcome of their academic learning. Under this circumstance, how do Chinese students communicate with their academic gatekeepers in University X?

On the basis of communication frequency with their lecturers, these participants were divided into two groups. One group reported that they often communicated with their lecturers while the other group indicated that communication with such staff members was rare. Alex belonged to the first group, and he felt that his communication with his lecturers was helpful and timely.

I communicate a lot with my lectures. Every week I greet them in class. After class if I have questions, I will contact timely and discuss my problems with them. (Alex)

Baixue agreed that communication with lecturers was beneficial for her academic learning and examinations. She used her own earlier experience in her Nursing course as an example to support her argument. Her communication with lecturers enabled her lecturers to have a better understanding of an ordinary student’s performances, including academic capability. Otherwise, he/she is judged by examination scores.

If you have better communication, it is good for your study and examination score. ... In the
experiment examination, if you often communicate with the lecturer, even if you feel nervous
and make a mistake, or forget one step, or break some stuff, the lecturer may think that you have
known the procedure and ignore your mistake, and then you still can pass. However, if you have
not communicated with the lecturer, and you forget one step, the lecturer may thus think that
you don’t know it at all, and then you may fail. (Baixue)

However, some participants reported that they did not like to communicate with their
lecturers. When I discussed this with Alex, he considered two possible reasons that
influence these Chinese students’ communication with lecturers. One reason is the
nature of the teacher-student relationship in Chinese education practice, which usually
does not place students and lecturers at the same level. For instance, the Chinese
saying ‘Yiri Weishi, Zhongshen Weifu’ (He who teaches me for one day is my father
for life) implies that Chinese students are placed at an inferior position, and they need
to respect a teacher as a father all their life, not as a friend. This saying may just mean
certain respect to teachers; yet, such respect is often not based on mutual respect.
Another reason is that some Chinese students lack competence to communicate with
lecturers. As a result, they are afraid to communicate with lecturers.

To some Chinese classmates, the teacher-student relationship is like ‘Laoshu Yujian Mao’ (a rat
meets a cat), and they nearly do not contact lecturers. ... Firstly, it is caused by Chinese traditional
teacher-student relationship. To them, lecturers are at a higher position while students are at a
lower place. Secondly, they are not confident with their English competence. (Alex)

Alex’s predication is supported by Rock and Baixue. They admitted the influence of
Chinese culture and English competence upon their communication with lecturers.
Rock indicated that he seldom communicates with his lecturers, and he is just a
listener in teacher-student communication, like in the Chinese context. He added that
his lack of competency in English hampered his efforts to communicate directly with
his lecturers.

I do not have many contacts with lecturers. ... As a Chinese student, I just listen to lecturers, and I
don’t have questions and opinions to communicate with them. ... Sometimes it is hard for us to
express ourselves in English. After all, one reason may be short of vocabulary, and the other is
the way of English expression. (Rock)

Baixue noted that there is an ever-lasting gap between lecturers and students in the
Chinese education practice, and this gap is still maintained when Chinese students
come to Australia.

Not many contacts with university lecturers. Chinese students are influenced by the traditional
Chinese education practice and there is a forever gap between students and lecturers. (Baixue)

Other reasons that hinder Chinese students’ communication with their lecturers are
discussed as well. One reason is that some Chinese students are too busy with their
own activities, and they do not have time to communicate with lecturers, which is best
exemplified in Ivy’s response.

Normally there are just few contacts, except for asking questions. We are busy with our own
business, and we do not have many contacts. (Ivy)

One student felt that it was unnecessary to contact lecturers. For example, Malu said
that she usually turned to other students, if she had academic difficulties.
I do not work hard in class and on assignments after school. I do not find any problems, so I have no questions to ask lecturers. I can ask other classmates, if I do not understand those questions. I always can find someone to explain those questions. (Malu)

Chinese students also talked about their impressions of lecturers. Some participants felt satisfied with lecturers, including their academic capabilities, although they didn’t have many contacts with their lecturers.

In terms of professional knowledge, of course he/she has no problem. (Shao)

As for their academic ability ... , at least, to me they are eligible as my lecturers. (Alex)

Lecturers are knowledgeable. ... Australian universities have done well to guarantee the quality of university lecturers. (Jordan)

Some Chinese students were impressed by their lecturers’ commitment and devotion. For instance, Alex recalls his communication experience with his lecturer.

Here the lecturers are very good, especially those lecturers who teach my TESOL course. .... We can ask her (the lecturer) any questions and she will reply as soon as possible. For example, in my last term I chose a wrong unit, but the faculty told me that they could not modify it, unless I contacted the lecturer. At that time the lecturer was sick, but I contacted her by email and she changed my unit immediately. The lecturers do very well for their job. If you make an appointment with them, they will wait for you as appointed. If they can help you, they will do their best. If they cannot, they will advise you to contact others. (Alex)

Most participants were satisfied with their lecturers’ professional competence. These lecturers were usually seen as easy-going and they tried to set up a positive learning space for students. They are therefore highly appreciated because of their teaching skills and significant knowledge.

In class, especially in tutorials, lecturers will not keep talking but encourage you to participate. ... Lecturers will spend only in a small section of time introducing knowledge in the textbook, and then most time lecturers will ask you to talk about opinions and communicate with others. (Rock)

Chinese students were satisfied that their lecturers usually treated all students equally. Jordan mentions that his lecturers did not simply judge a student based on his/her examination scores but on his/her contribution to the course.

I feel that they treat international students, not only Chinese students, not so strict. ... Lecturers can see whether you work hard. If they think it is OK, they will let you pass. (Jordan)

Shao also mentioned that his lecturers treated students equitably. He does not expect to be treated differently; rather, he hopes that his lecturers treat all students fairly.

Lecturers have done well in this field. ... I cannot find any differences in their eyes because I am a Chinese student. They will not treat you differently because you come from certain country. ... In my class, Chinese students, including those Chinese students from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Asian Chinese from Malaysia, feel that the attitude that lecturers give to us is the same. ... I don’t like that they treat us differently. ... Please do not treat us differently ... just because we are international students. (Shao)
These participants reported that the teacher-student relationships in Australia are different from that in China. Baixue described how Australian students responded to lecturers in class. She explained that she could not personally give the same response to her lecturers, since the teacher-student relationship in China is not the same as in Australia.

When a lecturer asked a local student to do an experiment together, the student said that he did not know how to do. Yes, if they (Australian students) can’t, they will tell the lecturer directly ‘I can’t’. Then the lecturer would explain it to them. Yet, Chinese students may feel ‘it is my responsibility since I don’t study hard’. (Baixue)

It is surprising to see that Chinese students highly appreciated the teacher-student relationship in Australia. In my interviews, Shao, Jordan and Rock compared the teacher-student relationship in Australia to that in China. In their comparisons, it can be seen that, firstly, in Australia the teacher-student relationship is different from that in China. Secondly, Chinese students appreciate the teacher-student relationship in Australia.

The relationship with lecturers is different from that in China. In China … you just need to listen to lecturers. … The lecturers just give, give and give as much as possible. Here … study is your own business, and lecturers just open a door for you. … It is not an obligation. … I don’t think that lecturers should have so many responsibilities. … The Chinese traditional opinion is ‘Shifu Ling Jinmen, Xiuxing Zai Geren’ (you need to do much practice after a master gives you some basic instructions). … In China … a lecturer’s responsibilities are too many. … Teachers are interpreted as a social symbol. As a teacher, he/she must teach you well. … In addition to giving you those answers, he/she must supervise and push you to work. … In Australia it is unnecessary. (Shao)

In Australian universities lecturers are friends. … They treat you as friends. … Chinese lecturers are baby-sitters. … In Australia if a teacher stays with you, you will feel safe, since he/she will help you. … In China lecturers force you to study … by examinations or assignments. Here it is different. … If you want to study, you need to force yourself; if you do not want to study, lecturers will not give you much pressure. (Jordan)

Here a lecturer is a guide, and … he/she can set up a bridge and let you reach there. Lecturers will provide you with ideas, rather than just telling you that there is only one way or one opinion, so that you can have more opinions. Lecturers will not confine you to a limited space. Instead, they will ask you to think from different perspectives. … It is a headache to communicate with lecturers in China. Sometimes even if you think you are right … they may say you are wrong. … They constrain you from creative and novel ideas, since they think it is not right or not good. … However, there is no simple ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. (Rock)

By reflecting on Chinese students’ communication with lecturers, they realised that in Australian educational discourse it is students’ responsibility, rather than lecturers’, to undertake academic learning. It is also a hint for them to think about their institutional identity in Australia.

Chinese students’ reflection on the teacher-student relationship in Australian higher education practice triggers my personal reflection on the role of being a teacher in the globalised higher education context, including in China. Of course, I understand that ‘teachers and learners in educational systems are subjected to the ideology of the institution’ (Kramsch 2000, 23); therefore, teaching and learning practice, including a
teacher’s identity and the teacher-student relationship in a particular educational discourse, is always influenced by a certain ideology and culture. To achieve effective communication with their lecturers, Chinese students still need a crucial transition to adapt themselves to their new academic environment; otherwise, in Australia they may lose in their academic trajectory.

However, Chinese students also presented a range of opinions about lecturers. Firstly, Chinese students were sometimes confused following communication with lecturers. The confusion not only derives from English language insufficiencies but also from other personal characteristics of lecturers per se. For example, Ivy complained that some lecturers were too strict with Chinese students, including her. She felt that these lecturers were hiding their natures (like ‘smiling tigers’) when communicating with students. These contradictory images of being a lecturer puzzled her; she did not know how to communicate with such lecturers adequately.

Apparently, lecturers are smiling, but they are not. Many lecturers are ‘Xiaomianhu’ (smiling tigers), and they often Xiaoli Cangdao (hide a knife in smile). ... You may feel that some lecturer is very nice, and you also have good interactions in class. You feel that the lecturer should not be so strict in marking the paper; however, when the result comes out ..., it is not as good as what you expect. I heard about it from some friends and they also felt that lecturers here are like this. (Ivy)

Secondly, some participants felt it was not easy to understand some lecturers due to their accents. For instance, Malu reported her difficulty in understanding some Indian-Australian lecturers.

It is difficult to understand the Indian-Australian lecturers. I attended an Indian-Australian lecturer’s class, and I just understood 30 percent. I suspect whether it is because of my English language. ... Yet those top students told me it is hard to understand, and they just understood a part, either. ... Maybe it is because of his accent. (Malu)

Thirdly, some participants were dissatisfied with some lecturers’ professional identity when examining their lecturers from the perspective of teaching performances. For example, Malu complained that some lectures were rather boring, since they just read their course notes and ignored class management.

Some lecturers clearly see that some students are talking in Chinese or some students keep coming and going. ... The lecturers ignore these and keep talking, no matter what you are speaking in Chinese, or no matter what you are doing in the lecture. Some lecturers ... just read their course notes. This is why some Chinese students do not attend those lectures. (Malu)

With regard to academic performance, Alex mentioned that some lecturers were not innovative, and academically they borrowed significantly from European studies rather than Australian.

Most books are bought from Britain and the United States, and there are no materials compiled by the local staff. The research logic is referred to Britain and France but not American logic. ... There is not much innovation in it. (Alex)

To sum up, generally Chinese students contact their lecturers and they also benefit from their communication. Most lecturers are recognised because of their profound knowledge, their devotion to position, their relations with students and their effort in
establishing a fair and free learning environment. However, some Chinese participants also expressed dissatisfaction with their lecturers. These unsatisfied voices mentioned some lecturers’ inactive teaching performances and class management, strong accents, their strange character in communication with students, and their insufficient course innovation.

In their communication with lecturers, Chinese students gain a perception of teacher’s identity by comparing different teacher-student relationships in China and Australia on the basis of their own experiences. Such comparisons, including Chinese students’ reflections on the roles of being a lecturer, drive me to reflect on the mode of teacher-student relationship in the globalised educational practice. This is discussed in Chapter Eleven.

6.3. Communication with Administrative Staff Members and Librarians

Chinese students’ communication with those administrative staff members and librarians is a part of their interpersonal communication practices when they study in University X. Here ‘administrative staff members’ refer to all those staff members responsible for student administration matters (including international students) in university. They are committed to exceptional service and are available to assist with (international) student administration requirements, and they are supposed to provide certain assistance for Chinese students as well.

According to these participants, there are two different attitudes to their university administrative staff members. One is that the administrative staff members provide good services for them. For example, Jordan felt satisfied with the administrative staff members.

I have contacts with some university administrative staff members. ... They work like in a service industry, and they try their best. ... I do not have a sense of being ignored or being discriminated. This never happens. ... I don’t feel that there is discrimination. (Jordan)

However, some participants felt that they do not receive adequate assistance from the administrative staff members. Ivy recalled her experience with such staff.

I want to know what documents I should prepare if my parents want to visit here. When I went to the Student Centre, they told me to consult an international advisor. Then I ran there and ... he asked me to call the Immigration Office and told me that he couldn’t help me. ... Then I was very disappointed and I felt that he was helpless. (Ivy)

Ivy also recalled another experience with the university administrative staff members.

To get a completion letter, I went to the faculty and the Student Centre. It was the first time to do this, and I worried a lot about each step. First I went to the faculty and the faculty told me to the Student Centre. Then I went to the Student Centre and they told me how to do this and that, and then they asked me to send an email. After the email, the Graduation Department asked me to go to the faculty. When I went there again, the faculty asked me to go to the Student Centre, and then I had to run here and there. ... They were a bit impatient. ... I didn’t know the procedure, so I was not sure about it. ... I did not see their impatience with local students. (Ivy)

Ivy felt like she was a football, being kicked here and there in different administrative departments. She reasoned that the services offered by these university administrative
staff members were not efficient at all, although her problem was resolved in the end. Yet, she felt that Australian students do receive better services without the run-around and impatience she had experienced.

Similarly, Malu recalled her experience with those administrative staff members and she was not happy with them as well.

I went to different places. ... They kicked me from the first place to the second place and then to the third place. ... I was lucky. I met a person and he gave me a telephone number. ... The problem was solved. (Malu)

More complaints about the university administrative staff members are recorded in my interviews. For instance, Rock regarded his university administrative staff members as not flexible at all, since they just followed those policies/regulations, which made it difficult for him to communicate with them.

They strictly follow regulations and there is no flexibility. ... In China if it is acceptable, there will be an exception. ... I do not like the style of their management, as sometimes I work hard, but the result is not what I imagined before. ... I feel that it is not humanistic. (Rock)

Like Ivy, Rock recalled that misunderstandings and conflicts with the administrative staff members often occurred, when international students were involved.

Most people who have experienced conflicts with the university administrative staff members are international students. Those local students may not need to contact these administrative staff members. Emotionally, they may have different treatments or misunderstandings to international students. ... Yet, it is hard to say that they have prejudice upon international students. (Rock)

Chinese students’ communication with their administrative staff members is a part of their communication practices in university. To be honest, once they turn to the administrative staff members, they normally do need their help; they also hope that they can have successful communication with these university administrative staff members. However, based on these students’ experiences, it can be seen that some Chinese students do not have good communication experiences with their university administrative staff members.

Without any interviews with the university administrative staff members, it is difficult for me to judge who is (are) right and who is (are) wrong in these communication conflicts. As an outsider, I hope that these university administrative staff members can listen to international students and provide them with certain assistance. After all, in Australia international students bring a multicultural higher educational environment for all students, including Australian students, and they should be given more concern.

It should be noted that the university administrative staff members need to receive trainings as international educational workers. They need to develop their intercultural competence so as to cope with international students, including Chinese students. They even need to make a hybrid identity, which helps them cross cultural boundaries and improve service quality for international students. Also, these ‘unsuccessful’ communication experiences make Chinese students’ achieve certain perception of Australian university administrative culture. Some participants reflect on Chinese culture and their own identity in communication with administrative staff members, in
which they are anticipated to (re)construct their identity with their ‘significant others’.

Apart from these findings concerning the university administrative staff members, I also questioned these Chinese participants about their communication with librarians. Undeniably, a library is an important place for all students and specifically for international students seeking information. It would appear to be essential that such students develop a sound working relationship with university library staff.

Overall, Chinese students demonstrated a positive attitude to librarians and their services, although they did admit that they had not had personal communication with them. For example, Baixue and Ivy were happy with their library and those librarians’ services – not only happy with the large stock in library but also the services provided by those librarians such as the orientation week.

I am satisfied since the book stock is large and I can borrow what I want. ... I think it is very good. Especially in the orientation week someone talked to me. ... They taught me many issues that I may encounter. (Baixue)

The library is fine. At least, I can borrow books there, and it can provide help for my study. (Ivy)

Malu mentioned that librarians had started to provide better services, but she admitted that she seldom turned to librarians for help.

The library is fine and I notice that the library has started to manage, such as speaking loudly when others are studying, occupying positions but not turning up. ... If a seat is empty and something is unattended for a long time, librarians will take it away. The library is fine, and I don’t have any dissatisfaction. ... No, I have not asked librarians for help. (Malu)

Rock felt satisfied with library services. To him, the library was not only a place to borrow and return books but also a place to communicate with other students.

Indeed, the library in University X is really good. ... The library is not only a place to borrow books but also a place to discuss and communicate, so students like to come to discuss questions. ... It is a learning centre but not just a pure library. (Rock)

The interviews revealed that these participants did not contact librarians. Maybe they feel that it is not necessary to contact them. If library services are good enough, they of course do not need to contact their librarians in person. However, they did express their satisfaction with library stock, services and management.

In summary, Chinese students indicated concerns about the services provided by their administrative staff members. A number of examples were provided including a lack of intercultural communication competence, different cultural and communication styles and an inflexible approach by some administrative staff members when dealing with international students’ requests for assistance.

From the standpoints of Chinese participants, it can be seen that some administrative staff members may not be sure how to solve problems for international students. Some university administrative staff members may lack international competence in the globalised education practice. The library was seen as a significant place to represent Chinese students’ institutional identity. However, these students admitted
that they did not have interpersonal communication with librarians. These students did not mention the reason for not communicating with their librarians. One probable reason is that Chinese students feel that it is unnecessary to communicate with their librarians, since some services can be obtained by other channels, e.g., Web-based services. Another probable reason is related to the inadequate English proficiency of Chinese students and the negative influence of Chinese communication culture.

6.4. Communication with Australian Students

Ideally Chinese students are expected to communicate with Australian students in university, which is also one of the reasons that Chinese parents support them to study in Australia. In my interviews, some Chinese participants said that they had imagined studying with local students before they came to Australia. In reality, what is their communication with Australian students like?

First of all, some participants indicated that they often communicate with Australian students. For instance, Alex communicates frequently with Australian students; yet, he mentioned that other Chinese students do not have access to so many opportunities to communicate with them.

I have Chinese friends studying in Business courses like Accounting. In their class, almost all the students are Chinese. ... They do not have chances to communicate with local students. But to me, I have many opportunities. Australian students ... help me solve problems in my daily life, and I am happy to communicate with them. ... By communicating with them, I know that some theories may not be updated or may be out of date. ... My insight is broadened. I like to communicate with them. ... The language barrier is not a problem. (Alex)

Alex also described his communication experience with Australian classmates. From his experience, it can be seen that, firstly, it is not easy for some Chinese students to get an opportunity to communicate with Australian students due to the large number of Chinese students in their course. Secondly, Chinese students usually would like to communicate with Australian students, since the local students can help them in some respects such as learning Australian culture and society and solving some problems in their life. Thirdly, some Chinese students’ English language proficiency is not a barrier in their communication with Australian students.

Australian students have much more teaching experience. ... They can help me in many aspects. For example, once one of my friends asked me to buy a painting board, I went to Harvey Norman, but I could not find it. Then I went to Officeworks, but I still could not find it. Finally, I went to a local student for help, he soon found a painting board for me. I feel that it is just like the Chinese saying ‘Yuanqin Buru Jinlin’ (a faraway relative is not as good as a neighbor), and communication with local students have really gained some benefits. (Alex)

Not every participant has the same experience as Alex. Baixue reported that she spoke only a few words with Australian students at the early stage of her stay in Australia.

Yes, I had few words with Guilao. Perhaps it is because I just came here. (Baixue)

Ivy also talked about her communication experience with Australian students, and she indicated that the reason of not communicating with the local students was that she worried about her English communication competence. Another reason was that she assumed that Australian students would have already known a lot about Chinese
students, and they would not want to communicate with Chinese students.

Not too many contacts with local students, except that we stay together in class. ... English language is the most important reason, and another reason is that local students do not like to communicate with us. ... I think Guilao may have learned a lot about us. They may think that we are not good at communication. They may think that we do not know how to speak English, so they feel reluctant to communicate with us. (Ivy)

I notice that Chinese students’ sense of identity influences their communication practices. For instance, Ivy’s prediction is simply based on her awareness of her own identity. This self-imagined identity brings negative influences to her communication with Australian students, and it also makes her miss opportunities to communicate with them and construct her identity in a new space.

Ivy’s prediction is confirmed by Malu. Malu recalled her own experience when overhearing a young Australian’s comment on Chinese students.

When I was walking in street, I saw some young local carrying wine bottles. ... Those boys said hello to me. ... I walked away immediately and I did not say anything. Behind me, a girl said to a boy, 'don’t talk to them, and they don’t speak English'. Really, she said that. I did not say anything and walked away. It was after 11pm then. I was on my way home after I finished my reading in university. ... Perhaps they had a sense of laughing at me. What they said ‘speaking English’ perhaps means ‘to speak as well as them’, but it is rather difficult for us. (Malu)

Malu also explained why she does not communicate with Australian students. As mentioned by Alex before, one reason is that there are too many Chinese students in her course, so it is not easy to get an opportunity to communicate with local students. Another reason is that it is difficult to enter the lived space of Australian students.

I do not have many contacts with local students. ... There are few local students in Accounting unit. ... I contacted one local student. ... That is a different social context which is difficult for Chinese students to enter. (Malu)

However, she admitted that she, including other Chinese students in Australia, has a strong desire to communicate with Australian students and improve her English level.

In language course, if there are fifteen students in a class, ten students will be Chinese. If one or two non-Chinese students are placed in my class, we will feel happy as ... we do not need to speak so much Chinese. ... Aspiration does exist. ... We hope that we can move toward what we expected before. For instance, after staying here for about two years, we can communicate with foreigners (including Australians) without any barrier. ... But many people may not reach the lowest requirement. (Malu)

Shao commented on the difficulties faced in communicating with Australian students in University X, given that they usually do not choose the same courses as most Chinese students do. In contrast to Ivy, he claimed that Chinese students have brought a positive impression to Australian students in academic learning.

I have communicated a lot with local students, although those Chinese students from other courses may have limited communication with them. ... Most Australian students have a good impression of Chinese students. We often do group assignments and communicate face-to-face or on the Internet. ... When I introduce myself, I will first tell them that I come from China and
what course I am doing. I will also ask them whether they would like stay in the same group with me. They usually would like to stay. ... They have a good impression of Chinese students, although some Chinese individuals may not do well. (Shao)

To conclude, Chinese students hope to be accepted and recognised by Australian students, but some students feel that it is difficult to communicate with Australian students because of their English language proficiency, English communication competence, different social and cultural contexts and their limited access to Australian students. Some Chinese students are not confident with their identity in their communication with Australian students; they also worry that they are not accepted, although some Chinese students are accepted by local students.

The influence of Chinese students’ sense of identity on their communication practices can be felt in examining their communication with Australian students. Some students lack confidence in communication with Australian students. One reason is that they, as non-native English speakers, do not have enough confidence with their English language proficiency. They are often besieged by the shadow of their negative sense of identity. However, one’s identity cannot reach completion. It is ‘the open, the non-identity of self with itself; the continuous difference of living being’ (Ferguson 2009, 194). Chinese students’ identity should never be a closed one; rather, it needs to be made and re-made continuously in their communication practices, including their communication with Australian students. Chinese students’ confinement to their fixed identity is adverse to their identity work. As such, they need to remove the shadow of a negative sense of identity, although to completely eliminate the influence of their primary identity is not possible.

6.5. Communication with Other International Students
In Australia the recruitment of international students is seen as ‘critical to the survival of many academic programmes and even some institutions’ (Brooks and Waters 2011, 160). Therefore, the number of international students, including Chinese students, has climbed greatly in the past few decades. It is supposed to be unavoidable for Chinese students to communicate with other international students in University X. Here I use ‘other international students’ to refer to those international students from other countries and areas, except for Chinese students and Australian students. If Chinese students are labeled as ‘Others’, other international students are regarded as ‘Others’ as well. When both are labeled as ‘Others’ in Australia, how do Chinese students communicate with other international students?

According to Malu, there are two opportunities for Chinese students to get to know and communicate with other international students in Australia. One way is to communicate with other international students in English language course (Malu did her English language course with other international students in University X); another way is to participate in some social events where Chinese students can contact other international students.

One way is that I have communicated with them when I was doing English language course. Another point is that I know some other international students when I go out with friends. (Malu)

Alex and Rock both indicated that they have a lot of contacts with other international students in University X. There are more opportunities for them to communicate with other international students than with Australian students. They also realised that
communication with other international students was different from communication with Australian students.

In my school, there is an official agreement between University X and Bahasa, Indonesia, so some Indonesia students are from there. ... Also, there are full-fee students from Singapore, Japan and Korea. ... Those Indonesia students are sponsored by the State, and they must go back to their country. Japan and Korea students usually stay for around half a year, and they do some training courses here. ... In my professional course, I communicate frequently with ... some international students from other countries like Vietnam, Indonesia, Laos and Korea. (Alex)

In different classes, I can meet different students. ... For example, in my previous unit communication, I did some preparation work with international students from other countries and areas. ... I know some of them in my class. ... We are all international students and perhaps they are not like local students. (Baixue)

![Figure 6.1: a group of Chinese students are washing sands for gold at Sovereign Hill, a suburb of Ballarat, Victoria, photo by Bin Ai](image)

Traveling with other Chinese students is a good opportunity for Chinese students to get to know more friends; it is also an easy way for them to experience their Chinese identity in Australia.

One participant said that English language was a barrier in communication with other international students.

There is a language barrier in communication ... for international students from different countries. We feel our English is good, but others may think it has problems. As such, language is a big barrier. (Rock)

Yet, other Chinese students explained that they do not experience as much pressure communicating with other international students as they do with those native English
speakers from Australia. For instance, Ivy did not feel as much stress, since she knew that English is not a native language for other international students either.

In English language course, my communication with them (other international students) is fine. Maybe English is not the native language for us, so I do not have stress in communication with them. If we cannot communicate well in English, we can use simple words to express, and we can understand each other. (Ivy)

Shao agreed with Ivy reporting that English language is not a problem in his everyday communication with other international students. That is, compared to his communication with Australian students, he feels confident in communication with other international students.

I have communicated a lot with other international students. ... We have more difficulties when we communicate with Australians. ... If you ask me to communicate with Koreans, Japanese ... and Malaysian students, I can speak English fluently ... since their English is not very good, either. They bulabulabula ... and talk a lot to me, like a machine gun. ... I also can bulabulabula to them. ... It will be fine, if they understand me. (Shao)

It can be seen that Chinese students’ communication with other international students is different from their communication with Australian students. They usually do not have so much pressure, and some even have more confidence, since they appreciate that English is not a native language for other international students as well, which helps international students have a common standpoint in communication.

In international students’ communication practices, Chinese students can reflect on their identity and re-shape it. They are able to realise the similarities and differences between other international students and themselves, all of which help Chinese students’ identity work. It can be seen again that Chinese students’ identity work and communication practices are mutually influenced. They feel more confident in their communication with other international students, since both parties are identifiable as ‘Others’ in Australia.

Chinese students’ communication with other international students in Australia is related to Chinese communication characteristics. For instance, In Ivy’s words ‘English is not our native language’, she used ‘our’ to refer to Chinese students and other international students, suggesting that she regards other international students as ‘insiders’ in communication (there is a degree of solidarity). In fact, Chinese people normally make clear distinctions between insiders and outsiders, and ‘a person with an insider status often enjoys privileges and special treatment beyond an outsider’s comprehension’ (Gao and Ting-Toomey 1998, 49). Hence, indicating an insider status to other international students makes Chinese students feel better in communication with them.

Yet, Chinese students subconsciously grant an outsider status to Australian students in their communication practices. ‘Chinese are less likely to initiate interactions or to be involved in social relationships with outsiders’ (Gao and Ting-Toomey 1998, 49), which can explain why some Chinese students do not feel comfortable in dealing with Australian students as outsiders. Such an insider-outsider division is adverse to the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students in Australia. Instead, they need to break these cultural circles to (re)construct a new identity, e.g., a hybrid
identity, in their new cultural space, if they can.

6.6. Conclusion
In this chapter, I have discussed Chinese students’ communication in their university, representing through their interpersonal communication with lecturers, administrative staff members and librarians, Australian students and other international students. In fact, Chinese students’ identity work does not have an independent existence; their ‘identity is constructed in the context of social relations’ (Ivanič 2006, 12). Their communication practices hence not only provide us with a full picture of how Chinese students communicate with their ‘significant others’ but also demonstrate us how their identity is constructed in their secondary discourses.

In the next chapter, I discuss Chinese students’ communication practices outside their university, which are connected to their academic learning inside their university. In the first section, I discuss Chinese students’ emotions and feelings and their various challenges when they just arrive in Australia. Their responses also include their different reasons of choosing Australia before their arrival, their impressions of Australia and/or Melbourne, and the comparisons they make between Australia and China. Their impressions and comparisons are mostly based on their perceived space and perceived space, and some are based on their lived space in Australia. Such information provides us with insights about their spatial transition process and about the context in which their communication occurs.

The second section is focused on Chinese students’ communication practices in their secondary discourses outside university such as their religion, homestay, part-time work, and their e-communication. Chinese students’ daily life in Australia and their communication with parents are discussed as well. Hopefully, my exploration of these communication practices of Chinese students outside university, plus their everyday communication inside university, will help me present a detailed description of their everyday life and identity work in Australia.
CHAPTER SEVEN
CHINESE STUDENTS’ EVERYDAY COMMUNICATION OUTSIDE UNIVERSITY

7.1. Introduction
In Chapter Six, I explored Chinese students’ interpersonal communication with those ‘significant others’ inside university, including their lecturers, administrative staff and librarians, Australian students and other international students, which is also a process of representing Chinese students’ identity work in Australia. In this chapter, Chinese students’ communication practices outside university are discussed in detail. All these communication practices are supposed to be connected to their communication practices inside university, since they help Chinese students achieve a full perception of their everyday life in Australia. Undoubtedly, their everyday communication practices outside university also play a crucial role in Chinese students’ identity work.

To represent Chinese students’ communication practices outside university and their identity work in these practices, I focus on their spatial transition process from their conceived space to their perceived space and then to their lived space in Australia. ‘Since existence is an event, my place in it is best understood not only as a space, but also as a time, as an activity, an act, a deed’ (Holquist 2002, 152). It implies that one’s existence is represented in his/her events, and it is influenced by social and cultural elements of spaces/place. Similarly, Chinese students’ existence and identity work are represented through communication practices in different spaces/places. In Australia, these spaces/places consist of Chinese students’ secondary Discourses, in which the communication practices are representations of Chinese students’ identities. Their identity work is also influenced by primary identities produced in primary Discourses.

This chapter is divided into two sections to explore Chinese students’ communication practices outside university. In the first section, I present their experiences when they first entered their new space and discuss their sense of identity in spatial transition. Their spatial transition is more than their physical transition from primary Discourses to secondary Discourses. In new space, these Chinese students need to confront a transition of their authoritative discourse. Their internally persuasive discourse is likely to be affected by external changes in their secondary Discourses as well. These changes are represented in everyday communication and influence their identity work.

The second section is focused on Chinese students’ communication practices outside university, which consist of their religion, daily life, homestay, part-time work, communication with parents and e-communication. Although their e-communication occurs in a virtual world, it is regarded as a part of their everyday life and should not be ignored. An examination of these communication practices outside University X, including their communication practices inside university discussed in Chapter Five and Chapter Six, can serve to capture the details of Chinese students’ everyday communication. Of course their identity work is explored in these practices as well.

7.2. Experiencing Spatial Transition: Conceived - Perceived - Lived
7.2.1. Why Australia
In Chapter One, I mentioned that one of the contexts of this project is that more and more Chinese students are now preparing to study overseas. Chinese students with a good financial support usually have at least two options at the closing stage of high
school: one is to sit Gaokao and then enter a Chinese university. The other is to sit a going-abroad examination and then apply to study overseas. When Chinese students are busy with their examinations, it is usually their parents rather than these students themselves who choose their destination of international study. Chinese students and their parents normally are not familiar with Australia. To them, Australia is just a conceived space in the southern hemisphere. Yet, a large part of Chinese students finally choose Australia as their destination and arrive in Australia.

According to my interviews, Chinese students’ decision to study in Australia is influenced by their parents, relatives and friends. For instance, Alex recalled how his decision was influenced by his parents’ friends.

My father and mother have classmates in the USA, Britain and Europe. ... My impression of Australia comes from my English textbook at Grade Three of high school. The last lesson in the textbook is Australia’s famous tourist destination Uluru, and there is a photo. At that time, I imagined that Australia is just like that. (Alex)

Similar to Alex, Jordan’s plan of studying in Australia was initiated by his parents. They wanted to have Mianzi (face) and hoped that Jordan, like their colleague’s children, could study overseas.

I was sent here. ... My parents always regard that international students’ life is good, and this can bring them Mianzi (face). ... In fact, the life is not like that. (Jordan)

Chinese students’ family culture also played a role in the decision to be involved in an international education. Some families do have a desire to send children overseas. For instance, Malu was influenced by her family since some family members had studied overseas.

Studying overseas is an expectation of my family. ... Studying overseas may symbolise success for parents. ... My cousins are working in foreign companies. One is working in a French company. ... Another one is working as a manager in Tianjin Office of a Melbourne company. Another cousin has already immigrated to Singapore. My family members were not born in Tianjin, so the family root is not deep. (Malu)

There were other reasons why Chinese students chose Australia. Alex acknowledged that the length of his course, the financial cost, personal safety, and even the climate of Australia were some of the factors considered before he and his family decided upon Australia as the place for his international education.

The length of Master course in the United States is longer. ... Not all universities’ quality is at a high level in the United States. ... Some are just at a normal level. ... The American currency exchange rate always fluctuates, although now it keeps coming down. ... The United States now is not safe. ... From the perspectives of time, money, personal safety and efficiency, it is not bad to choose Australia. (Alex)

Baixue mentioned the influence of her relatives in Australia, personal safety and Australian education policy as factors in her decision to come to Australia.

I have a relative in Australia. ... Australia comparatively is safe. ... Here the policy maybe is better for international students and we all feel fine. (Baixue)
The moderate Australian climate and natural environment attracted Ivy. Her family, friends and her classmates also influenced her decision.

I do want to go abroad. ... My family can support me financially. ... Also, some of my friends and classmates have already come here, and they told me that the climate and natural environment are not bad. It is a suitable place to study. (Ivy)

Chinese students’ expectation of Australian higher education also influenced them to choose Australia.

I come here since the education is different. ... I want to come and have a look. (Shao)

Based on these discussions, it can be seen that many Chinese students do not have a clear understanding of their international study destination at the early stage. Their decision to come to Australia to study is often influenced by their parents, relatives and friends. Before they come to Australia, they have a limited understanding of the conceived space, not to mention their lived space in Australia. Some Chinese students are not familiar with their future social and cultural space at all.

Having been brought up in their primary Discourses, Chinese students are heavily influenced by Chinese culture, family and their parents, and all these influences are represented in the process of their decision-making. For instance, Mianzi is one of the forces involved in their decision-making. ‘A person’s primary Discourse serves as a “framework” or “base” for their acquisition and learning of other Discourses later’ (Gee 1996, 141), and Chinese students’ communication practices and identity work in secondary Discourses are expected to be influenced by their primary Discourses.

7.2.2. Is Australia a brighter moon?
There is a Chinese saying ‘Waiguo De Yueliang Bi Zhongguo De Yuan’ (the moon in a foreign country is brighter than China’s moon). Although this saying is criticised in China because of its connotative flattery toward the Western culture, it is an indication that some Chinese people look forward to experiencing an overseas life. In Chinese students’ perceived space and lived space, is Australia’s moon really brighter than China’s moon? This notion can be explored by asking my Chinese participants about their experiences at the early stage of their stay in Australia.

It was not surprising to find that the first impression of Chinese students’ perceived space and lived space was different to their previous lived space and conceived space in China. Soon after Chinese students landed in Australia, some felt initial excitement whilst one reported experiencing an unexpected calmness.

When I got off the plane, I found that it is a wild and open place. The vision is very far, and the sky is blue, but there are very few people. (Alex)

In Australia My first impression is that the sky is too blue. ... I did not feel fear. ... I felt extremely calm. I do not know why I have that feeling. (Baixue)

When I got off the plane, I felt fresh. (Jordan)

I felt like dreaming. ... Everything to me is new, including my life. ... I was neither excited nor frightened. ... Yet, I just felt interesting in the first three days. Gradually I felt normal. (Shao)
At that time I just felt excited. ...Those people who have not experienced that particular context cannot understand it. (Ivy)

Generally, the first impression of Chinese students’ perceived space and lived space was that everything in Australia was fresh, and many things were different from those in China. Situated in a new socio-cultural space, influenced by the allure of Western culture and ideology, most Chinese students admitted their admiration and desire. Yet, Ivy expressed her different feelings at that moment.

Here the environment and greenery are different from China. The space is large, but you almost cannot see one person on the road. ... I was excited at the airport before I left China. ... But at the moment that the plane landed Australia ... I looked around and I felt lost and lonely. (Ivy)

The blue sky and white clouds impress Chinese students deeply, but they usually have no idea about their lived space, not to mention its culture and social relations in this space.

Ivy’s feelings were complex at that time. Her senses of loss and loneliness, including other participants’ senses of excitement and freshness, give Chinese students a strong signal that they have already left their familiar social and cultural space and entered a new space. As a matter of fact, some Chinese students immediately experience something of an identity crisis and feel lost at that moment.

When talking about their first impressions, these participants also compared Australia to China. These comparisons are understandable, as ‘people are inescapably bound to place partly because they are bodily beings’ (Seamon 1980, 195). These comparisons help Chinese students understand Australia, especially at the early stage of their stay in Australia. Their comparisons are a process for these Chinese students to re-examine their primary discourses and identities.
Before I came here, I imagined that I could communicate with local friends. I had expected that I might make foreign friends and go out with them. But after I came here, I did not have much different feeling. ... Melbourne is very small, and it is just like a satellite city of Tianjin. (Malu)

No matter where I go in China, I can see the crowd. I don’t feel alone, and I feel that I co-exist with others. However, when I got off the plane here ... I couldn’t see anyone. I felt that I came to another world alone. ... I felt lost and lonely. I felt depressed and a bit scared because I was not sure how long I can stand in such an environment. (Ivy)

Here is really different. It is not like in China, full of high buildings, and you cannot see the sky. However, here you feel that you are so close to the sky and the nature. ... The sky here is too blue. Is it really that the overseas sky is clearer than China’s? Yes, it is true. (Baixue)

In my interview, Shao described his experience when he just arrived in Melbourne. From his story, we can see how an ordinary Chinese student starts his new life in a strange space.

When I got off my plane, someone picked me up. I looked around, here and there. ... When I got off, it rained. Then it stopped when I got to my place. ... It was summer, but it was cool. I had to use the quilt at night. ... After I found the house, I went there, paid the rent and moved in. ... I did not have any feeling on the house. ... On the next one or two days I did not see anyone in the street. ... I wondered where they were. ... Next day it became hot in the afternoon. ... It became dark very late. ... I felt funny and strange. I walked alone from Box Hill South ... to Box Hill Centro ... in the hot sun. I felt very tired when I arrived there. ... When I wanted to come back, I found that I lost. ... Those houses were the same, and the roads were not straight but bend. ... I had no impression of the local street names. ... I remembered my street, and I knew how to spell it, but I did not see a street named with C on the way home. ... I remembered that there was a church, but ... I could not find it. (Shao)

Shao experienced many differences such as the weather, the season, the house, the street in his new lived space, and all these differences helped him realise the spatial change in his life. From Shao’s experience, it can be seen that Chinese students’ spatial transition from their conceived space (when physically living in China) to their perceived space and lived space (when physically living in Australia) brings them a sense of loss and triggers their identity crisis.

It appears that ‘people’s sense of both personal and cultural identity is ultimately bound up with place identity’ (Buttimer 1980, 167). Some participants admitted that they felt a sense of loss in spite of excitement and freshness, since Australia is a new space, in which cultural and social relations are completely different. Theoretically, Chinese students’ comparisons and reflections are likely to help them reflect their identity, as identity is ‘created by the accumulation of experience and knowledge in the mind’ (Benwell and Stokoe 2006, 19).

When Chinese students are experiencing their spatial transition, they encounter many challenges in everyday life. Generally, ‘the transition to university life is usually easier for those whose starting point is closer to the culture of the university than it is for those who are more distant’ (Kalantzis and Cope 2002, 29). Chinese students, given those differences mentioned before, may encounter more challenges in their spatial transition. In Chapter Five, I discussed Chinese students’ challenges in their university, in their English language course and professional course. Here Chinese participants discuss their everyday challenges at this transitional stage outside their
First of all, loneliness is a primary challenge that Chinese students encountered in their everyday life. For instance, Jordan talked about his journey to his university. The journey is not far; however, it is extremely painful for him because of loneliness.

When walking to university … it is very painful. My English is not good and the road is not familiar. Also I need to write assignments. … I feel my life is very bad. (Jordan)

Another challenge is travel by public transport. In Melbourne, it is comparatively convenient for the public to travel; yet, Chinese students still experienced difficulties. For example, Jordan described his depressing bus trip to Box Hill Centro.

I wanted to go to Box Hill Centro. I waited for around forty minutes and sat for about one hour on the bus. I did not know the route, and I did not understand why the bus did not come. … When I arrived there, it was dark and I could not buy any food or eat anything. (Jordan)

Baixue, Shao and Malu also mentioned their difficulties faced when travelling in Melbourne.
Here the transport is not as convenient as in China because there is a time limit. (Baixue)

The bus is different from China. ... I must press the button, if I want to get off. I did not know this, when I just came here. On my way home, I missed a few bus stations. If nobody got off, I would not know where I would go. (Shao)

I even did not know how to cross the street on the first day. Now I know that I must press a light button. At that time I saw that a person pressed a button and crossed the street, so I imitated and crossed a small street. (Malu)

These small challenges arise for Chinese students, because they don’t know the rules of public transport in new lived space. Whilst appearing quite trivial, such everyday experiences cause stress to these newly-arrived Chinese students.

In my interviews, Chinese participants discussed other factors that caused distress including homesickness, their adaptation to new life, and the relatively high cost of living in Australia.

When I first come here, I have to cook by myself. I can’t get used to the food outside. (Ivy)

I desperately want to go home, as I cannot find a sense of home here. ... I have to adapt to everything such as eating, sleeping and study. ... I have no friends and nobody helps me except for my homestay family. ... At the beginning the host of homestay was able to help my study, but it was not enough. ... I do not have friends here. I want to go back to meet my girlfriend. (Jordan)

Here the price of all the stock should time six, and now it should time seven. ... At that time I lived in homestay with six Chinese female students. I went to the supermarket with them, and they dared to buy anything. They took a bottle of sour milk, and it was worth a couple of dollars. If it is converted into Renminbi (Chinese Yuan), it is incredible. ... I feel that the price is normal after I stay here for more than one year. (Malu)

Moving from China to their perceived and lived space in Australia, these Chinese students have experienced a multitude of emotions, impressions and challenges in their spatial transition. From their lived experiences, it can be seen that not every Chinese student has the same feeling when they initially enter their perceived space and lived space. In this transition, some Chinese students experience excitement and even awe at the freshness of the new environment, whilst others struggle with their loneliness and loss in their secondary discourses. These different feelings and affects reveal that a Chinese student’s early experience in a host culture does not necessarily follow a simple cultural shock curve as described in the U-shape psychological and emotional change theory reviewed in Chapter Two. All these different feelings are so powerful and significant that they impact on the communication practices and identity work of Chinese student in Australia.

Chinese participants also compared their perceived and lived spaces in Australia with their previous lived space in China, and these comparisons not only helped them realise that now they have already entered a new lived space but also provided us with a picture of Chinese students’ lived context and their challenges. These challenges included their loneliness, travel challenges, academic learning difficulties outside their university (such as their homework and assignment writing) and the high living costs in Australia. Of course experiencing these challenges helped Chinese students...
learn and understand their lived space and assisted their communication practices and identity work in Australia.

The spatial transition of Chinese students is a comprehensive transformation from their conceived space in China to their perceived space and lived space in Australia, from their primary Discourses from their secondary Discourses. In Australia, Chinese students’ lived space consisted of different secondary Discourses in their everyday practices. In addition to the visible challenges, there are certain invisible challenges such as the change of culture and ideology in their secondary Discourses for Chinese students, since their new ‘Discourses are inherently ideological’ (Gee 1996, 132). The changes of ideology and culture in their secondary Discourses are supposed to bring different authoritative discourses to Chinese students, and hence Chinese students are expected to experience their internally persuasive discourses. It is in their internally persuasive discourses that Chinese students’ identity work, including their identity negotiation, is made and re-made. Chinese students’ identity work and their identity negotiation are mostly discussed in Part Three.

7.3. Experiencing Lived Spaces
In Australia Chinese students’ first priority is to complete their designated university course. During this period, they of course have diverse communication practices in their secondary Discourses. Their everyday communication outside university is a form of learning. In Chapter Three, I argued that everyday life is a form of cultural practices, and hence Chinese students’ everyday life is a medium through which they can achieve their cultural capital. To capture Chinese students’ communication outside university, their communication practices such as religion, their daily life, homestay, part-time work, their communication with Chinese parents, and e-communication are now discussed.

7.3.1. Religion as communication
In China religious activities are not allowed in educational zones, so Chinese students are not familiar with any religious activities before they come to Australia. In this section, I am interested in why Chinese students like to attend religious activities in Australia.

In my interview, Baixue spoke at some length about Chinese students’ responses to religion during their stay in Australia. She admitted that religion was a part of her own life, and she also indicated that going to church was not simply a result of religious belief for some students. According to her, some Chinese students in Australia were curious about religions, and some students found psychological comfort via spiritual commitment in their lives. Some students were attracted to the doctrines espoused by certain religions.

In Australia religion is a necessary part in life. ... I am a loyal follower. However, for some people going to church is just a form. (Baixue)

To me, religion is a spiritual hope. Facing many things, if I cannot solve them, I only can give them to God. (Baixue)

It is curiosity. I have a friend, and he is curious about religion ... just because of curiosity. (Baixue)

They cannot find psychological comforting, and hence they need to find spiritual support. I think
the majority are like this. In China you have relatives and friends, or perhaps you are too busy to think about religion, or you can find something else as spiritual support, or you can find spiritual support from other places. Here many people feel it is not easy to be trusted. ... Yet, God is always equal to everyone. (Baixue)

I have a friend, and at first he just feels religion is interesting. Gradually he begins to participate in a religious group. Maybe he feels the power of religion, and later he keeps it. ... All religions have the motto 'benevolence', that is, ‘be kind to others’. (Baixue)

Several Chinese students are visiting St. Paul’s Cathedral in the City of Melbourne. To Chinese students, the church is not only a place of worship and pray but also full of mystery.

Ivy explained why Chinese students attend religious events in Australia. According to her, some Chinese students attend religious activities as followers, but some students just regard religious activities as social events.

There are two reasons for some international students to attend religious activities here. First of all, perhaps they are religious followers. The second is that they want to know more friends. (Ivy)
In summary, there are at least four reasons why Chinese students attend their religious activities in Australia – the influence of their family, their curiosity about religion, their psychological needs and the attraction of religious doctrines. Some students regard religion as a social medium through which they become involved in Australia.

Chinese students’ participation in religious events also appears to be related to their previous education practice in China.

Interviewer: From the perspective of education, according to Chinese education logic ‘Chuandao Shouye Jiehuo’ (Transmit wisdom, impart knowledge and resolve doubts), is it because here lecturers quit their duty ‘Chuandao’, students can’t ‘Jiehuo’ and then turn to religion? ... Taken to a church, he/she finds religion as good as expected before, since there is an empty space in mind. Interviewee: Yes ... Yes, some people may feel curious.

Interviewer: They start from curiosity and gradually accept it, since their space is empty. ... In China their space is often occupied by lecturers, friends and relatives. ... But here nothing is in the space. Suddenly religion occupies that space due to their curiosity.

Interviewee: Yes. ... In China ... they may not think about this. Once they come to Australia, they feel lonely, and they have no spiritual support. ... They find that religion is interesting, and they also can obtain something such as psychological comforting and spiritual support. (Baixue)

Chinese students rarely have any contact with religions in education practice in China. When Chinese students enter an Australian educational context and have to face English language barrier and other challenges, they may not find an adequate channel to learn and immerse themselves into the host culture. As such, they may choose religion as a medium to learn about the local social practices. Baixue agreed that, without ‘Chuandao Shouye Jiehuo’ by their lecturers, without a sense of being concerned in their new space, Chinese students thus turn to religion to find spiritual support. By attending religious activities, at least they can communicate with local people whilst possibly fulfilling spiritual needs.

Other reasons that may drive Chinese students to attend religious activities were also discussed with Baixue. One is that religion can help Chinese students live a regular life. By attending regular religious events, these students feel that they are accepted as a member in their local community. The other reason is that some Chinese students need more opportunities to practice English.

They may know more friends in church and enrich their life. ... They will have a regular life if they go to church every Sunday. ... It is another form of self-discipline. (Baixue)

In my church, all of them are the local people. I cannot speak Chinese there. ... When I talk with them, they are happy to help me. I can communicate and practice English there. (Baixue)

To conclude, the possible reasons that Chinese students attend religious activities can be categorised into three key aspects. Firstly, some Chinese students have their own religious affiliations before coming to Australia. To them, religion has already become a part of their everyday life. Secondly, some Chinese students are influenced by their previous education practice in China. It is known that education functions as one of ‘ideological state apparatuses’ (commonly referred to as ISAs) (Althusser 2008, 16). In China, Chinese students’ educational institutions work as ‘a moral agent’ (McLaren 1996, 127), and they are dominated by Chinese culture and ideology in their primary Discourses, so they usually do not encounter a sense of identity crisis. However, when
Chinese students move into a multicultural space, due to the lack of concern of their lecturers and other staff members (at least, some students have such an impression), nobody can ‘Jiehuo’ for these students; therefore, they choose religion as a substitute. Another reason why Chinese students seek ways to participate in social practices associated with religion is related to the formation of a community of practice. Once Chinese students get themselves involved in religious activities in community, they may achieve ‘a specific “we-consciousness”’(Heller 1984, 90). That is, to attend their religious activities is a practical way for them to construct such ‘we-consciousness’, which in essence is a sense of being accepted in their new lived space in Australia. In one word, to attend their religious activities is not only a way for Chinese students to practice English but also a process of their self-motivated identity work.

7.3.2. Entering daily life
In this research project Chinese students’ daily life is a part of my concern, since I want to reveal their everyday life outside university. In my interviews, these participants talk about their daily life in Australia. Generally, there are two opinions about Chinese students’ daily life outside university. Some students feel that they are busy within their cultural circle; others feel that the daily life is rather painful and boring. For instance, Alex felt that his daily life in Australia was interesting.

I have two regular social activities. First, I organise a Townsmen Association. We invite those people from Wan (a short name for Anhui province, China) to come together every two or three months. We have talks at home and sometimes we go out for socialising. … The other one is that I play badminton every week. (Alex)

Jordan, Malu and Ivy mentioned that some Chinese students manage their time well and make their life meaningful.
You can have your interests, and you even can change them into a way to make a living. ... I like fishing and photographing. ... Those people who feel bored maybe just eat out, sing, dance and surf on the Internet but not study. If you can arrange your time to study and do something else, your student life is rich. (Jordan)

University X often organises social activities and international students often receive some invitations. ... If you want to participate, there are opportunities. One of my friends went camping and stayed one night outside. Later, their event photos were put up on the bulletin board next to the library. ... It seems that they are very happy. (Malu)

I feel that some boys have a happy life. ...They can buy a car and frequently visit sceneries around Melbourne. They can drink, chat and play games, or they go to bars, clubs and the Crown. Some of them enjoy a lot here. (Ivy)

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Some Chinese students often feel bored in Australia; some students still live in a Chinese way. They miss their life in China since their daily life in Australia is lonely.

Yet, some participants talked about negative social experiences in their everyday life. First, they often did not attend any social activities, so their life was very boring and painful.

Interviewer: Have you participated in any social activities organised by University X?
Interviewee: No, really. I have not. ... The life is painful. ... If I am in any city of China, I will not live like this. ... Sometimes I have some ideas, but I am not able to do.
Interviewer: These potential difficulties include language and culture. Is there anything else?
Interviewee: Friends, clothes, food, accommodation and travel, etc. (Ivy)

As an ordinary international student ...he/she just can go out for eating, shopping and playing balls with friends. If he/she can find more people, they may go singing together. ... If he/she does not study, he/she will feel bored. (Jordan)
According to Ivy and Jordan, some students’ daily life was boring as they do not have any social activities. Some participants also discussed why they do not like to communicate with others outside their university.

I know that there are some invitations. In this circumstance, there may be more Guilao. I am not confident, and I cannot integrate into them. They may look down upon us, so I am afraid to go. If the event is organised by Chinese such as Chinese Student Union, I do not want to go either, as I am not familiar with them, or as I do not know them as well. Also, we are all Chinese, and the event will not be interesting, so I prefer to stay at home. (Ivy)

Interviewer: Have you attended any social activities in your university?
Interviewee: I have not attended … because I like to stay with familiar people. … Those students who attend these activities are international students but not local students. …
Interviewer: In other words, your purpose is to communicate with those local students. If there are not local students, it is unnecessary to attend.
Interviewee: … Another reason is my laziness. But I cannot imagine what I should do, if all the participants are local students but me in an event. If I go, I may stay alone, and nobody may pay attention to me. Really! … I do have worries. … Perhaps 55-60 percent of my reason is because of my level of English. … They may feel that I am funny. Due to different behaviours and opinions, they may not accept me. (Malu)

According to Ivy and Malu, some students face a dilemma considering whether they should attend social activities. On the one hand, they are eager to participate in social activities with local students; on the other hand, they are always worrying that their English proficiency is not good enough, and thus they cannot be accepted. They sometimes also refuse to attend social events and activities organised by Chinese students, as they think that they cannot learn anything from such events and activities.

Some Chinese students do not wish to communicate with outsiders, even Chinese outsiders. Here I need to clarify the concepts of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ in Chinese communication practices. In Chapter Six, I discussed Chinese students’ interpersonal communication in university and pointed out that they often regard other international students as insiders in communication. However, when it comes to communication with unfamiliar Chinese students, they are labeled as outsiders as well. In Chinese students’ communication circle, there is no specific boundary between insiders and outsiders, depending on their communication context. This ambiguous boundary often becomes an excuse for Chinese students to refuse social activities. Of course it is a barrier for their communication and identity work in their lived space.

In summary, Chinese students’ daily life outside university is influenced by Chinese communication characteristics. Chinese students normally have a stable circle of relationships consisting of their friends and others with whom they sometimes socialise. Sometimes they refuse to communicate with Chinese outsiders. In their communication practices, their primary concern is whether they as outsiders can be accepted as insiders. With regard to attending the events organised by their university and Australian students, they worry that they cannot be accepted because of their English proficiency and their identity as an outsider. In this paradoxical behaviour, it can be seen that Chinese communication characteristics indeed act as an obstacle for entry to their new lived space. Chinese communication culture acquired in their primary Discourses does not help these students construct their new identity. That is,
the influences of Chinese cultural patterns, their previous education in China and their communication characteristics to some extent play negative roles in Chinese students’ identity work in Australia.

Some Chinese students’ boring daily life is an example of how their disengagement from the social life in Australia. Influenced by Chinese traditional culture, some Chinese students feel that they are not an independent student, and they financially rely on their parents. Therefore, their everyday practices are influenced by their sense of being a student, and thus they just live within their campus. Yet, without certain communication practices in new space, their identity work will be more difficult. On the contrary, those Chinese students who like to actively participate in social activities and get themselves involved in Australian culture will be more likely to be influenced by their secondary discourses. In this sense, their everyday communication and identity work are interacted, and both are influenced by those ideologies and cultural models in their primary Discourses and secondary Discourses.

7.3.3. Experiencing homestay

In Australia ‘one of the most popular means of accommodation for students is “homestay”, where students live with an Australian family that is willing to share their life and help the students become familiar with the country, its culture, food, way of life and its opportunities’ (Doria 2005, 33). In my interviews, these participants talked about their homestay experiences. Yet, I need clarify that some participants do not have their own homestay experience, but they recall others’ experience.

First of all, some participants admitted that homestay was not a pleasant experience. Alex and Jordan (Alex introduces his classmate’s but not his own experience) regard that homestay is not an appropriate option for Chinese students, if their purpose is to enjoy a comfortable life.

According to my classmates, there are good and bad families. Some are so good that they help you find a part-time job. Some are very bad and they even install a lock on the refrigerator door, and they only unlock it at dinner time. (Alex)

We did not eat well. ... The food was not good. I could not adapt to the food there. (Jordan)

However, some students still long for homestay, and they imagine that homestay can bring benefits to them. For instance, Baixue assumed that homestay not only means a comfortable life but also provides easy access to her communication with Australians. She desires to get along with Australians and find a sense of belonging in homestay.

It is not only because it is comfortable. For me the main purpose is to learn local people’s life, at least their living habits. ... Some students are eager to learn about the authentic Australian life. ... I can learn more about Australian life and immerse into their life. I do not hope to live in a community that I do not belong to. (Baixue)

Ivy also talked about her imagined benefits in homestay, although she does not experience it. She felt that homestay can provide benefits.

They look after you. ... When you go back, you have food. When you go to university, they prepare lunch for you. When you have dinner with them, they can talk about events on that day. When you are not well, they can look after you, etc. Homestay is helpful, although I have never
Jordan noted that homestay helps an international student quickly adjust to the local life. He admitted that at the beginning some restrictions may make international students uncomfortable. However, he sees these as necessary, since they can guide international students toward the right path.

Without the companion of parents, some Chinese students’ lives are a mess. Lack of independent living competence, it is easy to imagine how difficult their life may be in Australia.

Homestay is the quickest way to get used to international student’s life, but it depends on individuals. ... If you are easily to be managed, you can catch up with the pace at homestay. If the host is nice, you may have a fast way to accept Australian life. ... Your opinions and your habitual way of thinking are different from the host, so ... you will not feel comfortable. ... But if you ... accept the rules ... they can ensure that you have a sound trip in Australia. (Jordan)

Jordan still argued that homestay is an appropriate option for international students, including Chinese students, to learn about Australian life, and it can assist them to adjust especially in the early stages. He noted that homestay brings Chinese students
benefits such as more opportunities to communicate in English and get to know other international students. With the guidance of homestay host and other international students, Chinese students can gain a more independent status.

It is helpful in English. ... The host will tell you how to do something, but you must do it yourself. If you do it in a wrong way, he will tell you or ask another student to help you. ... Every day the host will arrange us to watch TV and learn English. We are asked to do housework and communicate in English after dinner. ... The host will arrange students to help me familiarise the way to university. ... It is necessary to experience homestay as a part of international life. ... It is better to let someone take you to the right track and then you move further. (Jordan)

Chinese students may encounter unhappy experiences at homestay, but it still can provide support and conveniences that they need, especially in their first months in Australia. At homestay, Chinese students’ unhappy experiences mostly originate from the differences in Australian and Chinese cultures. ‘Each living body is space and has its space: it produces itself in space and it also produces that space’ (Lefebvre 1991b, 170). When Chinese students move from primary space and enter homestay as their new lived space, it is assumed that there is a process to push them to change. Such a process is Chinese students’ identity transition in their lived space.

Moving from primary Discourses to secondary Discourses, Chinese students are still influenced by their home culture and habitus acquired in primary Discourses, so they do not know how to perform appropriately in new lived space. Living in-between different cultural spaces, these external and internal cultural conflicts are positive to Chinese students’ identity work. Their spatial transition of course is ‘not a smooth and harmonious process where tensions and incommensurability of cultures are evened out’ (Koh 2012, 169). In these conflicts (a form of practices), Chinese students are able to acquire Australian culture and construct their in-between space. Such a space is likely to be the birthplace of their identity work.

7.3.4. Part-time work
Learning is seen as ‘a process of engagement in a social practice’ (Williams 2009, 82). In Australia, Chinese students’ learning is ‘not only informed by their formal education, but also shaped by the informal learning they acquired through day-to-day life, and especially through part-time employment’ (Singh 2005, 16). These students ‘must seek insensibly to unite knowledge with the carrying out of that knowledge into practice’ (Kant 1992, 75). Apart from academic learning in university, some Chinese students have a part-time job. Chinese students’ part-time work is acceptable and necessary. Yet, how do these Chinese students consider their part-time work? How do they find a part-time job in Australia? These issues related to their part-time work are discussed in this section.

These participants revealed different attitudes to part-time work in Australia. Some students regarded international student life in Australia as a way of living but not just living as an international student. Their part-time work was a part of their everyday life, as important as their academic learning. For instance, Jordan regarded his learning as a way of living in Australia, just like an ordinary young man living and working in China, which means that his part-time work was an inseparable part in his everyday life.

Being an international student should be a way of living. ... Here the life style is a bit different
from in China. ... One’s growth is a result of experiences in life. (Jordan)

Some Chinese students regarded part-time work simply as a means to make money. For example, Malu expressed her admiration of her friend having a good part-time job, and she admitted that the purpose of her part-time job was to make money.

Her position is a teller in a local company. ... The job is not bad, and the salary is higher than me. It will be easy for her to find another job in the future. Although I have earned money, it is not related to my profession, and it is not beneficial to my future career. It just makes money. (Malu)

Malu also noted that her part-time work combined theoretical knowledge with work enabling her to obtain more practicum experiences. Yet, sometimes she felt guilty spending too much time on her part-time job.

Now we just learn some framework in textbooks without authentic practices and operations. I do not worry too much about my study, but I am a bit guilty. I know that it is not good to be such an international student. (Malu)

Malu’s opinion was supported by Shao. Shao explained that he experienced and learnt more from his work than from his textbooks.

Working as a part-time makes me have social contacts. ... Part-time working, going to class and resting are the main parts of my life. ... Yes, part-time working must be a part of my everyday life. ... My course is a part and my experience is another part. ... My theory is a part, but my social experience is more important. The two parts influence each other. ... I must learn the society. ... I can learn more, and I can better experience others’ feelings. (Shao)
Baixue and Ivy also offered their reasons for undertaking part-time work.

I have financial difficulty. ... I told my parents that they just needed to provide me with tuition fee and I could solve other financial cost. (Baixue)

One reason is that I want to enrich my life. ... Secondly, I want to lessen my parents’ burden, although they told me not to worry about financial issues. ... I have already grown up, and it is necessary to work to reduce family burden. (Ivy)

It can be seen that the purposes of Chinese students’ part-time work are not simply to make money. Some participants mentioned making money so as to ease the financial burden on their parents; some wanted to gain working experiences for their future; some sought to enrich their international student life and learn more about Australians and Australian society, and finally they saw the need to demonstrate to others that they had already matured and achieved certain independence in Australia. To some Chinese students, their part-time work is a part of their everyday life, and it is more important than, or at least as important as, the knowledge learned in textbooks. Their participation in their part-time work is a positive signal and a representation of their identity work; their identity work will be more difficult without social practices.

In addition to Chinese students’ attitude to their part-time work, how they look for their part-time jobs in Australia was also discussed. According to Baixue, the simplest way to get a part-time job is to go to a store in person and talk to the owner about skills and attributes. Baixue recalled how she looked for her first part-time job. Listening to her story, I admired her courage and strong will, and I also appreciated how difficult it was for Chinese students to find a part-time job in Australia.

If you do not have working experience, it is hard to find a job. ... I went to Box Hill Centro and asked the stores one by one. ... I did not know what I should say. I entered a store and asked them ‘Do you need a worker?’ ... in Chinese. They asked me whether I could speak Cantonese. ... I went to four or five stores, and all of them asked me to speak Cantonese. ... I hesitated ... but I kept on. ... I did not fear any more. I asked all the restaurants in that area, since someone told me that the easiest job is in a restaurant. (Baixue)

Malu reported that Chinese students usually choose to work for Chinese-Australians. One reason is that Chinese-Australian owners like to employ students at a lower rate than experienced staff in order to increase their profits. Another factor is that Chinese students often lack qualifications and will accept manual jobs. Many Chinese students are not confident speaking English and consequently prefer to look for a job posted on Chinese websites.

Most Chinese students look for a job in the stores owned by Chinese-Australians. ... One reason is that the job is introduced by some friends, and these friends are also working in Chinese stores. Another reason is that there is a Chinese socialising net for students, and a lot of job information is posted there. Chinese bosses hope that Chinese students can work for them, since their English is not good either. Another reason is that they can save cost compared to a local. (Malu)

Malu’s reasoning is supported by Ivy. Ivy talked about why she works for Chinese-Australians. She felt that Chinese students’ English language proficiency is a key in job hunting. Without confidence with her English, she just looks for jobs in Chinese communities.
I find some part-time jobs, but all bosses are Chinese-Australians. ... If I look for an Australian boss ..., if my response is not fluent in the interview, he may think that my English is not good enough. Perhaps he will not employ me. ... I do not have enough confidence. (Ivy)

For privacy reasons I did not directly ask my participants about the salary that they earned in these part-time jobs. Yet, given that Chinese-Australian employers are likely to employ Chinese students at the lower end of a salary scale, it is plausible to predict that their salaries will be relatively low. Malu’s comment supports this assumption.

I have a sense of being exploited. But most students ... don’t have any awareness to oppose it. From their perspective, they think it is natural since everyone is like this. ... They do not feel anything strange or wrong. ... My first boss was very bad, since he just paid me little money. Now I feel that I should quit that job then. But ... I worked there for half a year. (Malu)

Chinese students’ part-time work is often rather difficult for them, since they, mostly born in the late of 1980s or the early of 1990s, have never worked in China. Alex described his painstaking working experience.

Once I worked with a classmate, and his job was to build a fence. The fence is about 2 meters high, and we need to dig a four-meter deep hole. ... It just rained that day, but I still went there. When the job was half-done, I told my classmate that I didn’t want the salary, and he could find someone else to finish it. The first reason is that it just rained. The soil is sticky, and it is full of mud at the site. It was too tiring, and I would never do such a job in China. (Alex)

Although Chinese students are paid at a very low rate, they normally do not take any measures to fight against their poor treatment. One possible reason is that they know that it is not easy to get a job, since they don’t have any qualifications or work skills. Another possible reason is related to Chinese culture. As I discussed in Chapter Three, it is crucial to keep a harmonious atmosphere in Chinese culture. Therefore, even if some Chinese students do not accept the poor treatment, they would choose to leave quietly in the end rather than resorting to a legal solution.

I should note that ‘to leave quietly’ is an attitude originated from Chinese Taoism. In Taoism, those so-called sages often choose to ‘leave quietly’ in the end, and it is also an appropriate approach for them to run away from the trifles and find their happiness elsewhere. It also can be an example of the influence of Confucianism, since ‘to leave quietly’ may mean a form of tolerance mentioned in Confucianism and Buddhism. In Chinese communication characteristics, ‘resorting to a legal solution’ is not regarded as a popular approach for ordinary Chinese people, since this approach often implies an open dispute. Yet, Chinese communication philosophies advise ordinary people to avoid open disputes and seek an internal harmony. It can be seen that Chinese cultural patterns are represented in Chinese students’ communication practices, when they are living in Australia.

Chinese students’ part-time work is supposed to be connected to their academic learning, and this has been confirmed by these participants. For instance, one Chinese student regarded his part-time work could provide him with opportunities to learn more than was possible from a textbook. It was noted that many Chinese students just choose to do labor jobs in Chinese-Australian companies because they do not have any qualifications or skills. The second reason is that these students have not gone
beyond the influence of a Chinese circle, so they tend to look for positions provided
by some Chinese-Australians. Finally, Chinese students’ part-time work is influenced
by their English language proficiency. Some students are not confident using English,
so they avoid working for Australians.

Chinese students’ part-time work is related to their identity work. Working part-time,
even in a Chinese community, helps Chinese students find a sense of independence
and also construct their identity in these social practices. Their salary to some extent
symbolises that they are mature people and that they are able to support themselves in
their host country. Therefore, Chinese students’ part-time work is not only an effective
way for them to contact and enter Australian society; it is also beneficial to their
identity work in Australia.

7.3.5. Communication with parents
The implementation of one-child family planning has influenced Chinese families
since the 1970s, and today many Chinese students are the only child in family. When
these young students come to study in Australia without the companionship of their
parents, whether they still continue to communicate with parents and how Chinese
parents influence these students’ everyday life in new space are not known yet. In this
section, I interviewed these participants to see how they communicated with parents; I
also explored how their everyday practices were influenced by their parents.

Firstly, these participants indicated that they often communicate with their parents.
Thanks to modern technology, it was easy to communicate with parents by telephone
or via the Internet.

We talk once on phone or have a visual talk via the Internet almost every week. I often send text
messages or photos to my parents. (Alex)

I communicate a lot with my parents. ... Normally we ... ask about their health. ... I talk to them
when I need to make a decision. (Ivy)

We communicate once or twice per week. When I just come here, I often call my parents. ... I talk
about psychological feeling with them. (Jordan)

Yes, a lot. I call my parents every week. (Shao)

Chinese students’ communication with their parents continues to be important when
they are studying in Australia. They admitted that the content of communication with
their parents has changed to simple greetings such as inquiring about health
conditions after staying in Australia for some time. It is a signal of their concern about
parents’ health, which is a Chinese way to greet seniors and shows respect to parents.
They also communicate with parents and turn to them when they need to make
decisions. Yet, the frequency of their communication is lessened as time goes by. This
could be a signal demonstrating development in Chinese students’ independence and
identity in Australia. The influence of their parents’, as a symbol of the influence of
Chinese culture, is a crucial force in Chinese students’ everyday life; at least, it is a
force for Chinese students to maintain their cultural identity.

Secondly, Chinese students are influenced by parents in their host space. Alex, Jordan
and Malu mentioned the influence of their parents upon them.
My parents have influenced me a lot ... About one week before I came to Australia, my father advised me to be self-respected, self-confident, self-reliant and self-esteemed. ... He told me that 'You cannot do that just because you see others are doing. Never parrot others’ words'. (Alex)

Yes, a part of stress comes from my parents’ expectation. (Jordan)

If I have trouble, I would contact my parents. ... We will have more frequent communication, if something unexpected occurs. (Malu)

In academic learning, Chinese students often keep their parents in mind and regard them as a source of motivation. Their parents’ expectation indeed provides them with a strong motive to do well and also encourages them to work hard in Australia.

I hesitated for around one month. ... My parents finally told me if I could stay in Australia, they would come to Australia. Then I said ok, and I would try to stay. ... Yes, at this crucial moment my parents supported me. (Alex)

Vanity should be a part of reasons that drives Chinese students to achieve high scores in their examinations. ... Yes, they can call their parents and tell them that. ... Parents feel happy when they talk their children to others. They may proudly say that my daughter achieved well. ... My spiritual support is my mother. When I am not in a good mood, if I can call my mother, I can work harder immediately. (Baixue)

My parents have supported me a lot and they have spent a lot of money on me. I cannot take any risk in my study. If I fail one unit ..., I need to spend so much time, energy and money. ... I have to think about my parents and my family. (Ivy)
It can be seen that Chinese students’ parents not only provide them with financial assistance but also with their life experiences, especially when Chinese students face crucial moments.

Chinese students have a sense of guilt concerning their parents. Some students feel guilty because they are living in a remote country and cannot look after their parents in China. Shao talked about his sense of guilt.

My parents are getting older, but they have to afford my international study. ... Yes, I have a sense of guilt. I don’t want them to work too hard. (Shao)

Shao felt that his parents have given him too much. Yet, as an international student in Australia, he cannot reward them. In Chinese culture, such reward to parents is regarded as Xiao (filial piety). Xiao, as ‘a basic Chinese virtue celebrated in many Confucian texts, is the dutiful submission of children to their parents’ (Yao 2003, 680). It involves ‘gratitude and respect for the parents who brought one into the world’ (Goldin 2011, 35). Chinese students’ Xiao to their parents is an example of the influence of parents on them. It is also a representation of the influence of Chinese culture. Located in a different cultural space, Xiao often triggers Chinese students’ identity work, which is further discussed in Part Three.

Chinese student’s communication with parents plays at least two roles in their identity work. On the one hand, Chinese students regard their parents as one of their motives in their academic learning. Chinese parents encourage these students to participate in academic learning and other social practices, which undoubtedly will contribute to their identity work in Australia. On the other hand, Chinese students connect Xiao to Chinese culture. Some of them have a sense of guilt concerning their parents, and they feel that it is their obligation to go back to look after parents. The influence of Chinese parents, including these students’ Xiao to parents, drives Chinese students to attach themselves to their primary Discourses, and it may bring about negotiation in their identity work.

7.3.6. E-communication

With the arrival of e-communication era, ‘space stopped being an obstacle’ (Bauman 1998, 77). This has already influenced Chinese students’ communication in Australia. In this section, it should be clarified that Chinese students’ e-communication includes diverse forms of electronic communication such as their online communication and telephone communication, and so on. Given that Chinese students now are living in a space far away from their parents and friends, their e-communication is supposed to be more frequent and more important than ever. In my interviews, these participants discussed their e-communication in Australia.

First of all, the importance of Chinese students’ e-communication in everyday life, including inside and outside university, is recognised. For instance, Alex talked about the importance of e-communication for Chinese students.

The Internet is vital for our learning. For example, in University X we ... must access to the Internet to download lecture materials and upload electronic assignments. ... We use the Internet on campus or at home to access the data base to get the first-hand materials. The Internet has great impact on Chinese students. ... with regard to networking, some Chinese websites such as
Renren Wang (Renren Network, a Chinese social network) and Xinlang Weibo (Sina blog, a Chinese social network), including Facebook, are used by Chinese students. ... We use Tengxun QQ (Tencent QQ, a Chinese social network) to communicate with parents as well. (Alex)

E-communication is not only a medium in Chinese students’ academic learning but also a way of making contacts in their life. It helps them make friends and keep in touch with each other. Its importance is also mentioned by other participants.

The Internet is very important. ... Here I use the Internet much more frequently than in China. I know how to find some stuff from the Internet to help my study. It is also helpful in my life. For example, I usually check the bus time and how to take a bus from one place to another place on the Internet. ... It is hard to image what my life will be like without the Internet. (Baixue)

A Chinese student will be dark without the Internet. ... You cannot survive without the Internet. Many students cannot keep away from the computer. ... First, they need it to relieve pressure. They use the Internet to kill time and amuse themselves. They also find psychological comforting on the Internet. ... They use it to contact friends in China. (Jordan)

The Internet is very important. ... The house provided for me ... must have the Internet. ... What we use to contact the outside world such as information, domestic friends, including our course work, is the Internet. (Shao)

Chinese students may visit Chinese websites more frequently. ... Some Chinese students read local websites such as The Age, but more people read Chinese websites. (Malu)

E-communication is not only beneficial for Chinese students’ academic learning; it provides them with assistance in their life such as their travel. It also helps Chinese students contact parents and friends, relax and learn social and cultural knowledge.

We cannot write assignments and do research without the Internet. ... We often contact lecturers via email. (Ivy)

You may communicate with a lecturer for around twenty times on the Internet in one term. ... Our lecturer may send an email back via his/her mobile phone ... and it is very quick. (Jordan)

I write a lot of emails to my lecturers. Sometime if they are not in the office, I write an email to contact them. ... The Internet is very important. (Alex)

However, when it comes to e-communication in their online courses, two participants admitted that they do not like to respond to others in e-communication courses. According to Rock, his silence in online communication is influenced by Chinese communication characteristics, as Chinese normally don’t like to express their opinions publicly. Ordinary Chinese often assume that this may lead to open disputes. Such a characteristic also makes some Chinese students lose their voices in their online learning, including responses to their online courses.

Many courses need students’ online feedback. Chinese students assume that it does not matter without their responses. ... Yet, after the lecturer revises the course according to those students’ responses, Chinese students may feel that it is not suitable for them. ... They may feel prejudice upon them. ... In fact, when Chinese students are invited to propose suggestions, they usually do not say anything. ... It is related to the communication characteristics of Chinese students. (Rock)
Ivy also keeps quiet in her online courses. She likes to read others’ responses online, but she does not like to post her responses online. She explains that one reason is that she has not experienced such online courses in China before, and she is unfamiliar with this new learning model. Another reason given also relates to Chinese culture. Therefore, she believes that her previous education practice in China and Chinese communication culture made it difficult for her to participate in this peer-study learning approach.

I read but I will not respond. ... If I know the answer, others may also know it, so it is unnecessary for me to answer. ... I do not have an awareness to participate. ... Maybe it is because there is no such a method of teaching in China. (Ivy)

Ivy’s response shows us that Chinese students’ e-communication in online courses is influenced by Chinese communication characteristics. In such a peer learning model, Chinese students often feel that it is meaningless to discuss with their peers, since only their teachers are qualified to be the centre/authority of academic communication, even in their online courses. It also indicates that Chinese students are not confident with their academic competence yet. They are afraid to make mistakes or lose their Mianzi and therefore prefer to keep quiet in e-communication.

Chinese students’ e-communication is a part of their everyday communication practices, and it has brought about advantages such as access to a social network, to information, to quick and easy communication with parents, and even amusement and relaxation in life. Chinese students’ e-communication in online courses is a part of academic learning, but some students would like to keep quiet in online courses. One probable reason is that some students worry about losing Mianzi if they express different voices publicly. After all, ‘to Chinese, public disagreement is a face-losing act’ (Gao and Ting-Toomey 1998, 63). Another probable reason is that some Chinese students have not experienced this learning model. All in all, in Australia Chinese students’ e-communication is still influenced by Chinese culture; their identity is also imprinted on their e-communication practices.

7.4. Conclusion
This chapter consisted of two sections. In the first section, I was concerned about Chinese students’ communication at the stage of their spatial transition. My discussions shifted from Chinese students’ conceived space to their perceived space – their impressions of Australia/Melbourne – and finally to the challenges encountered in their lived space to fully represent how they experience their spatial transition. Their feelings and impressions in their spatial transition were found to be crucial to an understanding of their communication practices and identity work. Chinese students’ comparisons of distinctive spaces between Australia and China were discussed as well. Their conceived space, perceived space and lived space are interwoven and interacted, since their everyday communication and identity work are influenced by/in these spaces. Given that ‘the space of a (social) order is hidden in the order of space’ (Lefebvre 1991b, 289), the different orders in Chinese space and Australian space are likely to bring about conflicts and also trigger Chinese students’ identity work. They may help them produce a thirdspace for their identity work.

In the second section, I explored Chinese students’ communication practices outside university including their religion, their daily life, homestay, part-time work, their
communication with parents and their e-communication. These activities not only represent Chinese students’ communication practices but also demonstrate to us how they are influenced by Chinese cultural patterns and how they participate in communication practices in new lived spaces. It is in these communication practices that Chinese students produce their own space and (re)construct their identity.

Chinese students’ identity work is continuously made and re-made in communication practices; their identity work is supposed to be a potential force that influences their communication practices in Australia. How Chinese students feel their identity work in communication practices, and how Chinese cultural patterns, embedded into their everyday practices as culture and/or ideology, influence their identity work in new space are both explored in Part Three.

In Chapter Eight, I first describe Chinese students’ institutional identity, namely, how Chinese students perceive their institutional identity from the standpoint of their self. I also describe Chinese students’ institutional identity from the standpoint of their imagined others, since ‘in order to forge a self, I must do so from outside’ (Holquist 2002, 28). Next Chinese students’ becoming identity work is explored from two perspectives. One is how Chinese students feel about their dynamic identity in Australia. The other perspective concerns Chinese students’ becoming identity in their communication practices with others. Such an examination is undertaken to enable me to represent a full institutional identity of Chinese students in Australia.
PART THREE
DATA AND ANALYSIS
IDENTITY WORK OF CHINESE STUDENTS

By an examination of Chinese students’ communication practices inside and outside university in Part Two, I captured a large number of specific details of their everyday life in Australia. I explored the everyday life of Chinese students from their lived experiences such as their impressions of their courses, their impressions of perceived space and lived space, their academic learning, interpersonal communication, and their communication practices outside university. Chinese students’ identity work, including their identity negotiation, was found to be embedded in their everyday practices; their identity work is expected to influence their communication practices in different Discourses.

In Part Three, I concentrate on Chinese students’ three different identities in Australia: institutional identity, cultural identity and national identity. Institutional identity refers to how they perceive themselves as Chinese students in University X, including how they as Chinese students are perceived by others. Cultural identity is focused on how Chinese cultural patterns influence their everyday communication. Chinese students’ national identity is discussed as well so as to explore how national identity influences their identity work, including identity negotiation. I must clarify that this division of Chinese students’ identities is just for the sake of my discussion, since these identities are closely connected. They cannot be separated from one another; they are reflected on Chinese students’ everyday practices, very often, simultaneously.

In Part Three, I also discuss Chinese students’ identity negotiation in Australia. In fact, Chinese students’ identity negotiation exists ubiquitously in their everyday communication. To capture the complexity of their identity negotiation, I place it in an imagined but practical Discourse: will Chinese students go back to China or will they stay in Australia at the end of their course? At first sight, it is a question to choose where they will go, but it is in essence a question of their identity, since one’s identity is closely related to certain space and place. By examining Chinese students’ identity work at this particular time, space and place, the centrifugal and centripetal forces entangled in their identity negotiation are discussed in detail.

Structurally, Part Three consists of three chapters. Chapter Eight is concerned with Chinese students’ institutional identity. Chapter Nine is focused on Chinese students’ cultural identity, national identity and their influences on Chinese students’ everyday communication practices. In Chapter Ten, I explore how Chinese students negotiate their identities and what forces are involved in their identity negotiation.
CHAPTER EIGHT
CHINESE STUDENTS’ INSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY

8.1. Introduction
In Chapter Seven I discussed Chinese students’ communication practices outside their university. In the first section, I discussed their challenges and experiences at the early stage of being in Australia, focusing on their spatial transitions from their conceived space to their perceived space and lived space. In the second section, I discussed these students’ diverse communication practices outside their university, including their religion, homestay, daily life, part-time work, their communication with Chinese parents and their e-communication. These communication practices interact with their communication practices inside their university discussed in Chapter Five and Chapter Six. By the detailed description of their everyday communication practices inside and outside their university, I tried to represent their everyday communication practices, including identity work, in Australia.

As I discussed in Chapter Three, communication is related to identity. In this research project, I place Chinese students’ identity work in their everyday communication practices, since identity ‘must take its meaning from the Other, and … a particular identity is situationally defined in the course of social interaction’ (Rew and Campbell 1999, 10). All the different spaces and those ‘significant others’ in Chinese students’ everyday communication practices are supposed to be tied to their identity work.

In this chapter, I discuss Chinese students’ institutional identity from two aspects. One aspect is focused on Chinese students’ self-reflection on their institutional identity. These participants describe different portraits of institutional identity presented by Chinese students. Another aspect is to explore Chinese students’ institutional identity from their own perspective and then from the perspective of their imagined Others. Such a self-and-Other description provides us with a full portrait of Chinese students’ institutional identity in Australia.

Chinese student’s becoming institutional identity is explored through communication practices, since identity can be perceived as ‘reflective self-images constructed, experienced, and communicated by the individuals within a culture and in a particular interaction situation’ (Ting-Toomey 1999, 39). I start from Chinese students’ identity transformation felt by Chinese students themselves in communication with others. I then discuss Chinese students’ identity transformation in communication with other Chinese and/or Chinese-Australians, which can be a supplement to Chinese students’ communication practices with those ‘significant others’ discussed in Chapter Six. The purpose is to explore how Chinese students’ communication practices in their secondary Discourses influences their identity work.

8.2. (Self-) Portrait of Institutional Identity
8.2.1. Four portraits of institutional identity
As I discussed in Chapter Three, everyday life is often considered as routine, repetitive, and rhythmic to most people. However, if we can examine it closely, we will find that ‘what is mundane and ordinary to one person might be quite extraordinary to another’ (Scott 2009, 2). Similarly, if we perceive Chinese student’s institutional identity as a group of international student enrolled in University X, they are supposed to have different representations of institutional identity. Given that
‘identity is expressed through forms of representations’ (Barker 2008, 216), my examination of Chinese students’ portraits in their institution hopefully can help capture something of their institutional identity.

Four portraits of Chinese students’ institutional identity are represented in my interviews with these participants. The first portrait represents Chinese students who just regard themselves as ordinary international students in Australia. These students admitted that they focus on their academic learning in university, and some said that they also spend a small part of their time on their part-time work associated with their institutional identity. Their everyday life in Australia consists of two parts: one is to do with their course, and the other is to work as a part-time employee. For example, Alex divided his life into two parts, but he also noted that most of his time is spent on his course.

80% of my time is spent on reading, looking for learning materials, attending classes, writing assignments on campus, and 20% of my time is spent on my part-time work and participating in social practices. (Alex)

The second portrait of Chinese students’ institutional identity is represented by those Chinese students who do care about their course but do not work as hard as we would expect. Rather, they just spend limited time on their course. Academically, they may narrowly pass examinations based on temporary intensive preparation before their examinations, often with the help of their peers, although sometimes they may fail as well. For instance, Malu admitted that she did not concentrate on her course. She believed she was lucky to pass her units given that she only worked intensively on her program just prior to the examinations.

Honestly I do not spend much time on my course. I just read textbooks before writing assignment so as to know what I should write. Before examinations I go over all the stuff in the term. ... Most time I watch videos, films, American TV series, and do part-time jobs. ... Now ... I have understood the difficult level of the course and regularity such as the contents that lectures may test. It will be fine, if I review them. ... I just read something that I feel useful. Normally I do not attend class, since I can listen to online lectures at home. (Malu)

The third portrait of Chinese students’ institutional identity is represented by those students who concentrate on their course in university but ignore their social practices outside university. These students may have been advised to follow the Chinese saying ‘Liang’er Buwen Chuangwaishi, Yixin Zhidu Shengxianshu’ (concentrate on the sages' books, and ignore what is going on beyond one’s immediate surroundings). Malu talked about one of her friends, a Chinese student leading such a life in Australia. She does not appreciate his (her) life, as it is only focused on learning.

Some people keep studying ... four terms continually, four units each term, and they never work as a part-time worker. After they finish their course, they go back to China immediately. Aren’t they real international students? I feel that authentic international students should live here after they leave China, but they just attend their class. They may not concentrate on their course but just follow this procedure. Finally their score may not be bad. (Malu)

Such an institutional identity portrait is also exemplified by Rock. Rock saw himself as a typical Chinese student in Australia, since his life was limited to his campus. Only inside the campus does he feel safe. It can be seen that some Chinese students
just live as if they were living in their imagined Chinese discourse, although they physically stay in Australia. Their life is still much like that of an ordinary Chinese student living in China. They don’t communicate with others as well, especially with the outsiders such as Australian students and other international students. Perhaps they occasionally communicate with others, but their communication is normally in a Chinese style, since their identity has not changed in any significant way. They concentrate on their course as reading ‘Shengxianshu’ (the sages’ books), but very often the outcome is not so satisfying. Yet, I must admit that in Australia few Chinese students live and study in this way, but they do achieve a high score. Their high examination score is a heritage of Chinese education, which should not be viewed as their achievement in Australia.

It is a pure student’s life. ... I have not entered Australian society yet. ... International students ... cannot contact too much in the society but focus on their study and campus circle. Once they go out, their circle is more complex and more dangerous. ... When they go out, they may have a sense of fear. (Rock)

The fourth portrait of Chinese students’ institutional identity is represented by those Chinese students whose life does not match their institutional identity in Australia. Sent to Australia by their parents, these students are supposed to study as international students in University X; however, they do not concentrate on their course at all. Alex and Malu both reported that some Chinese students live such a life in Australia.

Some Chinese students do not sleep in the evening and do not get up in the morning. ... They often stay at home, play cards, computer games and even mahjong and so on. They may go to clubs and the Crown for entertainment. (Alex)

Another group of Chinese students like going to night clubs. They are young, rich and beautiful girls and boys. Generally, most of them are simple. Honestly they are too naive. (Malu)

Such a group of Chinese students cannot be ignored in Australian higher education practice, although their number may not be too large. Spoiled by their Chinese parents, suddenly placed in Australia, lack of independent living ability and English communication competence, some Chinese students just live in a Chinese community, which makes it more difficult for them to forge their new identity in Australia. Unfortunately, their everyday life in Australia often is not understood by their parents, who do not understand Australian culture and English language as well. Some Chinese parents just pay tuition for children, but they are not able to communicate with university due to English language barrier. These parents had thought that Australian lecturers have provided good services for them; however, the reality is that their lecturers usually cannot look after every aspects of these students’ everyday life, and these students are often overlooked. Therefore, more attention should be given to such a ‘forgotten generation’ in Australian higher education practice.

Reflecting on these portraits of Chinese students’ institutional identity, it can be seen that, firstly, some Chinese students focus on their course whilst spending a small part of their time doing part-time work. It is thought as a good combination of their theoretical learning and social practices. Secondly, some Chinese students regard that their social practices such as part-time work are more important than their course, and they thus spend a small part of time on their course. Academically, they just need a pass in their examinations; sometimes they also fail their course. Thirdly, in spite of
physically staying in a host cultural space, some Chinese students’ international life is
the same as their previous life in China, since they may have not realised changes in
their secondary Discourses. Alternatively, perhaps they have realised some changes,
but they have not fulfilled their transition. Fourthly, some Chinese students do not
care about their course at all, although they are sent to Australia as international
students by their parents.

Indeed each of us is a member of many Discourses, and each Discourse can represent
one of our ever-multiple identities. In everyday practices all these different Discourses
need not, and often do not, ‘represent consistent and compatible values’ (Gee 1996,
ix). Yet, one’s Discourses and identity work are mutually influenced. In light of
Chinese students’ different communication practices in their secondary Discourses,
they are seen to have represented their institutional identity differently, although they
are often entitled with the same institutional identity as Chinese students in Australia.

Chinese students’ secondary Discourses ‘are not mastered by overt instruction, but by
culturation (apprenticeship) into social practices through scaffolded and supported
interaction with people who have already mastered the Discourses’ (Gee 1996, 139).
Chinese students’ identity work needs to interact with their communication practices
in everyday life, in which their identity is constructed as well. For those Chinese
students who just read ‘Shengxianshu’ but ignore social practices, their identity work
is likely to be more difficult. Another point that should be noted is that some Chinese
students spend too much time on social practices such as part-time work, so they need
to find a balance between their course and social practices; otherwise, their everyday
life cannot match their institutional identity in Australia.

8.2.2. Institutional identity portrait from self
Previously, I discussed four different portraits of Chinese students’ institutional
identity. All these portraits provided us with a general picture of Chinese students in
their institution. Yet, ‘communication is the simultaneous experience of self and other’
(Shepherd 2006, 25); self is supposed to play a part in communication practices. As
such, one’s self-portrait is involved in his/her identity work. To capture Chinese
students’ self-portrait is a way to understand their identity, since identity is recognised
by ourselves and by others (Barker 2008). In this section, I examine how Chinese
students perceive their self-portrait, although it is difficult to produce an accurate self-
portrait.

In my interviews, Chinese participants admitted that it was not easy to produce a self-
portrait of their institutional identity. Rock commented that in Australia the population
of Chinese students is too large to draw a universal portrait for all of them.

Maybe Chinese students do not have any common characteristics at all, since they have different
characteristics. Some Chinese students can achieve HD, while some Chinese students keep failing
the same unit. Some Chinese students stay up in the library, while some of them ... play computer
games all night. Some students may never come to university, but some students may stay in
university all day. (Rock)

Yet, these Chinese participants did generate self-portraits of their institutional identity.
Three self-portraits of Chinese students’ institutional identity are drawn based on their
responses. Firstly, Chinese students are seen to be poor at communication, having
limited interactions with others in university. Even though some of them work hard and can achieve a good examination score, they don’t like to communicate with others in class. For instance, Baixue explained how she saw Chinese students and herself in class communication.

I feel that, not only I, maybe most Chinese students, have few interactions in class. ... On the whole, Chinese students are not good at communication, although I admit that some can do their examinations very well. ... Chinese students are not active, and they are quiet. (Baixue)

Ivy also portrayed Chinese students as silent students, often hesitating to express their opinions. Her comment is consistent with Baixue’s opinion.

We are not good at expressing ourselves, but we have many psychological activities. (Ivy)

According to Ivy, Chinese students usually cannot participate in social practices in local community due to their insufficient communication competence. Ivy assumed that the reason is that Chinese students’ English language is not good enough. Yet, Ivy’s sophisticated psychological activities show that Chinese students should not be simply regarded as being weak in English language, although they often keep silent. Their psychological activities as hesitation are evidence showing that indeed they are often struggling in-between their primary Discourse and secondary Discourse.

We cannot integrate into the local community. ... Many friends, including me, want to contact local friends, but we do not succeed. ... We expect to communicate with Guilao. At the beginning, we did have communication. ... We found that communication was not as we had expected before. ... The relationship became weak and weak ... because of English language, since the local think that Chinese students’ English is not good enough. ... They may not like to communicate with us. (Ivy)

Jordan also argued that Chinese students’ communication in their institution depends on their English communication competence and their confidence.

If your English language is good, you will have a wide communication circle, and then you will have more confidence to speak in class. ... If you close yourself, if your language is not good enough and you don’t like to communicate ... your circle will be very small. (Jordan)

The second self-portrait is that Chinese students are heavily influenced by Chinese cultural patterns and Chinese communication characteristics. For instance, Malu noted that some students just like to live in a Chinese community but not to communicate with Australians. They prefer to consume Chinese-Australian’s services and work for them as well.

Chinese students can be divided into several categories. ... One category is similar to me, and most time they live in a Chinese circle. ... Food shopping, cooking and other aspects in everyday life are also conducted with Chinese or Chinese-Australians. For example, if they buy or repair a car, they will look for a Chinese-Australian repairing factory. ... A small part of their spare time is spent on their part-time work to make money for food or eating in restaurants. ... Another group of Chinese students that I have contacted is a better group. ... Chinese students from University M are different, and their quality is better. (Malu)

Malu also compared the characteristics of Chinese students from different universities at Melbourne. According to her, Chinese students from University X are Zhongyong
(mean), while those Chinese students from other universities are different. In Chinese culture, Zhongyong is used to describe ‘mediocre human qualities’ (Yao 2003, 832). These differences are mostly influenced by different cultures in different institutions; yet, such a self-portrait of Zhongyong is influenced by Chinese culture.

The characteristic of Chinese students from University X is Zhongyong. ... Besides writing their assignments, going to university, eating, they spend their time on the Internet and watching some videos at home. They even watch some Chinese TV shows and Chinese TV series. (Malu)

Academically, Chinese students are influenced by Chinese education model. They usually pay great attention to academic learning and examination scores in university, although, as I discussed before, a small part of Chinese students do not concentrate on their course but just live in Australia in the name of international students. Ivy noted that Chinese students are too concerned about their examination scores; yet, their higher scores do not mean that they have a better understanding than local students.

Besides our English language, perhaps our life is different. For example, to Guilao, their study is not an important part in their life, and it is just an episode. But ... to most Chinese students, they regard study as very important. Maybe it is related to culture. ... In the library, we usually can see most students are international students, but you can see many local students only before examinations. They normally don’t spend too much time on their course. ... Chinese students are not like this. (Ivy)

Ivy suggested that some Chinese students participated in social practices. However, their purpose was to graduate and not to necessarily immerse themselves in local culture and society.
More or less, we integrate a bit, but it is impossible to change the general direction. No matter what the process is, the ending is that we want to get that piece of paper – graduation. (Ivy)

Thirdly, in regard to Chinese students’ self-portrait of institutional identity, these participants admitted that some Chinese students present to Australians a negative portrait of what it is to be a Chinese international student. For example, Baixue felt that some Chinese students are poorly behaved, and they also lack self-discipline in public areas.

Chinese students have brought bad habits. ... The impression that the local people give to me is that they care a lot about environment ..., not like Chinese. Maybe it is because of the large population in China and the differences in educational and personal quality. On the whole, my impression is that we are not as good as the local people. (Baixue)

Another negative self-portrait of Chinese students’ institutional identity is produced by those spoilt Chinese students with a good financial condition. Baixue noted that they do not care about anything at all, including their course. She explained that the motive of their studying does not originate from themselves, so they do not cherish their opportunity that they have been given.

Some people forget why they come here; they do not attend class but stay at home for computer games. ... Many Chinese students’ family provides them with tuition fee, living cost and ... they don’t let their children feel any stress. ... Their study intention, in most cases, comes from family but not from themselves. ... They do not cherish the opportunity to study. Some people lack self-discipline and self-dependence. ... They belong to a group with good financial conditions. ... They gradually forget their study, and they don’t care about anything. (Baixue)

Jordan classified Chinese students into three categories: rich and hard-working, rich but not hard-working, and not rich but hard-working. These categories may not cover all Chinese students in Australia, but he admitted that some students are rich but not hard-working at all. He also argued that they presented a negative portrait of Chinese students’ institutional identity.

They are a group of rich Chinese students ... and they can be divided into hard-working students and not-hard-working students. ... Another group of Chinese students do not have much money, but they work very hard. Those Chinese students who do not work hard and do not have money will not come to study in Australia. (Jordan)

Chinese participants’ interviews provide us with different self-portraits of Chinese students’ institutional identity in Australia. Firstly, most Chinese students are not good at English communication because of lack of confidence in their English proficiency and English communication competence. Although they have a strong desire to communicate, it is not easy for them to immerse themselves in Australian community. Secondly, Chinese students are influenced by Chinese cultural patterns, including Confucian culture represented in their everyday life. Thirdly, the attitudes and actions of some Chinese students present a negative portrait of Chinese students’ institutional identity to their host population. All these portraits are not able to cover all Chinese students in Australia; yet, they provide us with a general idea of how these Chinese participants see their institutional identity.

When discussing Chinese students’ portraits with these participants, I noticed the influence of Chinese culture on Chinese students again. These students are supposed
to have been influenced by English culture for years (at least they are influenced by their English learning since language and culture can never be separated); however, living in secondary Discourses, they are closely attached to their primary Discourses, which supports the notion that primary Discourse ‘always effects behaviors in secondary Discourse to a certain extent’ (Gee 1992, 109). Looking at Chinese students’ self-portraits, it can be seen that they are still heavily influenced by primary Discourses when living in secondary Discourses.

One’s primary Discourses and secondary Discourses can be represented in his/her performances simultaneously. Through these Chinese students’ portraits, we see that some Chinese students have achieved certain integration into Australian culture and society, even for the purpose of graduation, which suggests that in reality we can be ‘members of two conflicting Discourses’ (Gee 1992, 109). As such, living in-between these Discourses provides a possibility for Chinese students’ identity work, maybe even related to their hybrid identity in Australia.

**8.2.3. Institutional identity portrait from (imagined) Others**

In addition to these self-portraits discussed before, the portrait of Chinese students’ institutional identity is also discussed from the perspective of the Other – their imagined Others. Here by ‘imagined Others’, I refer to those Others from different primary Discourses such as Australian students and other international students, and they are involved in Chinese students’ communication practices.

Chinese students’ identity is influenced by their reflection on how others look at them, since one’s sense of self is based upon ‘what others say about and how they act toward one’ (Lachicotte 2009, 225). As such, to understand the self, one need respond to oneself as an object. Chinese students should know how others look at them so as to capture their institutional identity in Australia. To explore Chinese students’ institutional identity from the perspective of the Others provides us with a particular perspective, since our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, ‘because they are located outside us in space and because they are others’ (Bakhtin 1986c, 7). The role of the Others not only acts as a mirror to see the self but plays a crucial role in one’s identity and everyday performances.

Yet, I should clarify that in this research project I do not interview those Others, and I do not know exactly how Others will respond to Chinese students’ institutional identity. I use ‘imagined’ to refer to Chinese students’ imagined Others’ responses based on their communication practices with them. In my interviews, these Chinese participants attempt to construct their identity portraits from the standpoint of their imagined Others, and these portraits are believed to help interpret Chinese students’ communication practices and identity work.

Given the large number of Chinese students in Australia, it may be difficult to draw a universal portrait for all of them from the standpoint of those imagined Others. For instance, Rock argued that Chinese students are a multi-cultural group, and in his imagination it is difficult for Australians to see their commonalities and differences.

Chinese students come from different areas ... and they may have large differences in their behaviours, everyday communication and their learning method, not to mention communication and language barriers for those students from Northeast China and Guangdong province. There
are cultural differences, because China itself is a multi-cultural country. (Rock)

Shao agreed that it is difficult to produce a universal portrait of all Chinese students as the population is too large. He noted that nobody is able to provide a comprehensive and accurate description for all Chinese students in Australia.

The number of ... Mainland Chinese students ... is increasing gradually, and it has climbed to the top over recent years. The large number of students means a large variety of quality, which ultimately is reflected in their external performances. (Shao)

However, these participants talked about their identity portraits from the perspective of their imagined Others. Firstly, there are two distinctive opinions held concerning how much Australians as their imagined Others know about Chinese students. One point is that Australians do not understand Chinese students, since China and Chinese culture are still mysterious to them; the other is that Australians understand a lot about Chinese students. Alex and Shao regarded that Chinese are mysterious to Australians. That is, Australians do not understand Chinese, including Chinese students, since geographically China is so remote from Australia.

To local students, they always think that China is a faraway and mysterious country. (Alex)

They all think that Chinese are rich and mysterious. (Shao)

By contrast, Malu regarded that Australians, especially their university lecturers, know much about Chinese students.

Those lecturers know Chinese students very well, since they have already taught many Chinese students. (Malu)

At the first sight, the two opinions appear to be contradictory. However, it is evident that Chinese students are not sure how Australians as Others perceive them. These opinions also mean that Chinese students bring different portraits to these Others.

Malu also provided some identity portraits from the standpoint of imagined Others.

There are some positive images of Chinese students. Some students work very hard, and they interact with their lecturers and answer their questions, and even argue with lecturers about the questions that they explained. For example, they even may tell a lecturer that his/her calculation is wrong in class. (Malu)

Different from Malu, Shao argued that Chinese students, especially those Chinese students born in rich families in the post-1980s and post-1990s, bring some negative portraits to their imagined Others, since they usually do not work hard in Australia.

Many people think that Chinese students are very rich. ... Yes, this is the first impression. ... Secondly, they like playing out. By the way, I mean those Chinese students who come to Australia in recent years. ... They have some negative images. (Shao)

Another portrait produced from the standpoint of these participants’ imagined Others is that Chinese students often have a strong sense of harmony in their communication. They do not like to argue, but they would like to accept others. This portrait is
supported by Rock, and he agreed that Chinese students have a sense of harmony. As a result, they are capable of attracting and embracing others, which makes Chinese students somewhat influential.

The local people feel that Chinese students are kind. ... Chinese students like to contact and communicate with different people. ... Most of them like to embrace others. Chinese students are trying to assimilate others. ... Among international students, the influence of Chinese students is much greater than others. ... They also like to attract others to join in this group so that the group becomes larger and larger. ... Some Chinese students join in a local student’s circle, but more Chinese students like to stay together. (Rock)

The final portrait drawn from the standpoint of Chinese participants’ imagined Others is that Chinese students are not good at communicating with outsiders. Alex, Malu and Rock mentioned that Chinese students are not so good at communicating with outsiders and strangers. They often keep silent, and they also don’t speak publicly. Instead, they like to communicate with insiders. For instance, they discuss and refer to those insiders’ assignments in their process of learning.

Many Chinese students are quiet and do not like to speak, so local students regard that Chinese students are shy. ... Australians students think that Chinese students are smart ... but they do not like to talk. (Alex)

Perhaps Chinese students are shy, and they do not like to ask questions. In their writing, they like to copy or refer to each other. (Malu)

Chinese students have opinions within their circle, but they are not good at expressing their opinions to outsiders. ... For most Chinese students, the reason of their silence is their education received before, which is ‘you should keep your opinion if you have’. ... They were taught not to communicate with others. Now it has already become their habit, and they would not like to communicate. (Rock)

Seen from the perspective of Chinese participants’ imagined Others, these portraits develop the sketch of Chinese students’ institutional identity and also reveal their institutional identity portraits. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that such a large group of Chinese students consists of diverse portraits. For instance, some Chinese students work so diligently and even dare to challenge their lecturers; some Chinese students lack self-discipline. Some contradictory portraits are discussed as well. For instance, some Chinese students are not good at communicating with outsiders; yet, they are active in their communication with insiders.

The institutional identity portraits produced from the perspective of Chinese students, including different representations of their institutional identity and these institutional identity portraits produced from the perspective of their imagined Others, are detailed descriptions of Chinese students’ institutional identity in Australia. It can be seen that their institutional identity is still influenced by the culture acquired in their primary Discourses.

Examining Chinese students’ institutional identity from different perspectives – the self and the Other – helps achieve different portraits of their institutional identity. In these discussions, different portraits of Chinese students’ institutional identity are described in light of a variety of aspects of their everyday experiences in Australia. Essentially, Chinese students’ institutional identity is related to Chinese culture; their
everyday communication practices are also representations of Chinese culture in themselves. In my interviews, Chinese students start to perceive their institutional identity from the standpoint of their self and their imagined Others, which suggests development in their identity work.

8.3. Experiencing Becoming Institutional Identity

8.3.1. Experiencing transformation from the perspective of self

The way that we perceive ourselves is supposed to be always changing, and it never stops. Our identity transformation is also represented in our communication with others. Practically, when we encounter people who are culturally differently from us, their ways of thinking and behaving can challenge our fundamental ways of experiencing. When we encounter people who are culturally dissimilar, or when we stay in an unfamiliar culture, our identities usually experience transformation (Ting-Toomey 1999). Similarly, when Chinese students enter their new space, their identity is supposed to transform in their communication.

In this section, I explore how Chinese students endure identity changes in Australia. First, Chinese students admitted that they feel changes in themselves, although some changes are slight. For instance, Baixue and Jordan indicated that they had gained independence. Baixue also believed that her lived experiences in Australia helped her mature.

I have become more mature, as I experienced a lot. Originally I regard that going abroad is just like going to another city. But ... I found huge differences. ... I become more mature. (Baixue)

The international student’s life has taught me a lot. ... Your life is controlled by yourself, and you do not belong to anyone but yourself. ... You are not controlled by your parents. ... Here you are independent. ... My international student life gives me a large independent space. (Jordan)

Alex admitted that he had become more independent, more mature and begun to understand his life. His part-time work experiences in Australia helped him develop a new outlook on life.

In Australia ... the principle is ‘no pains, no gains’. ... For example, I have worked in a restaurant; I have washed 700 or 800 plates and over 200 pots one night; I have removed weeds in the sun for one whole day; I have sold printers and experienced difficulties with customers. However ... the most important is the experience of making money. Although I washed so many plates and felt very tired, the colleagues were very nice to me; although there were difficulties, and although my customers might complain that ‘your English is not so good and I do not understand you’, after half a year’s torture, I improved my spoken English and listening. I can understand them and even can argue with them. Then I feel gratified. (Alex)

Secondly, Chinese participants suggested that they were being influenced by Western culture and they were moving away from Chinese culture in some ways. Ivy realised that her everyday performances had become somewhat Westernized, although it may not be noticed by others. Malu also felt her life was taking another ‘trajectory’.

I feel a bit Westernized. ... For example, if I walk in street, people may smile at me and say hello to me. Wherever you go, I would like to say Xiexie (thank you) and thank you. These habits have been taken to China. (Ivy)
Perhaps my whole life has changed. ... I have classmates who got married at 23 or 24. Their child is one or two years old now. ... I am 26, but I am still a student. I have to write assignments and sit examinations. ... I have no job, no boy friend, no car and no house. However ... my life becomes free. ... It doesn’t follow a Chinese trajectory. ... My life is a bit running out of the trajectory. ... First, perhaps it is because I have left the environment. ... Second, now the people around me are international students and many are similar to me. (Malu)

Thirdly, some students recognised slight changes in themselves, and they would like to accept these changes. However, not all Chinese students have this attitude to their perceived changes. For instance, Rock accepted that he endured some changes; yet, he still felt that he was an ordinary Chinese student but not an Australian. This means that his identity is but partly done. That is, he is neither a Chinese student who has just arrived in Australia, nor an Australian.

The ... international student’s life is not successful. ... Yes, I have some changes, after I come here. ... These changes come bit by bit. ... I feel that I am more like an independent international student rather than an Australian. ... Even if I work outside, most people that I contact are international students, and the number of the local people is just few. One reason is that I am afraid to communicate with the locals. After all, I am not so confident with my English. Another reason is that I am lack of social practical experience. (Rock)

Rock also spoke of some changes in him, but he talked as if he was facing an identity dilemma. On the one hand, he does not perform like an Australian yet in his everyday life, although he feels changes in himself. On the other hand, he does feel his identity transformation, although this transformation has not been fully achieved as yet. Rock’s remarks suggest that he is probably living in a thirddspace. As I discussed in Chapter Three, this thirddspace is likely to be a cradle of a hybrid identity work. It is possible that Chinese students may achieve a hybrid identity living in this thirddspace.

8.3.2. Experiencing transformation from the perspective of Other
In the interviews, some participants reported that they not only experienced identity transformation but could also recognise changes of identity in communication with other Chinese students and/or Chinese-Australians. For instance, Alex explained that Chinese students' relationship with other Chinese students and/or Chinese-Australians was different from that in China.

In my course communication among Chinese classmates is not the same as in China. ... They are a little money-oriented. .... I sometimes wore a uniform to classroom as I just finished my part-time job. Sometimes they were not happy to talk to me, so I told myself ‘never mind’, and then I started to look for new friends. (Alex)

Similarly, Ivy provided an example to prove that in Australia the relationship of Chinese students and/or Chinese-Australians was different from that in China. From her experience, we also can see Chinese students’ identity transformation in Australia.

Here I feel that there is certain interest, or taking advantage of each other, in making friends. ... The relationship is not so pure. Why? I have a friend here, and she is from North China. ... Every time when she meets difficulties, she will come to me for help. But if she is fine, she never comes to me. The impression is that if someone needs your help, he/she will come to you. But if his/her life is fine, he/she will not come to you. (Ivy)

Baixue realised Chinese students and/or Chinese-Australians do not behave like they
do in China. She recalled her communication experience with her relative, a Chinese-Australian, to exemplify Chinese students’ and/or Chinese-Australians’ becoming identity in Australia.

The relationships between Chinese-Australians are not like in China. My relative mentioned that here the relatives ... are not close to each other. Normally they don’t visit each other. ... I had such a psychological preparation, but I felt very bad when I came here. It is a cultural shock, and it is cultural transformation, but the change is too big. (Baixue)

Malu reported that in Australia the identity portrait of some Chinese students and/or Chinese-Australians had changed. By connecting one’s personal quality to his/her family and education level, she assumed that Chinese students, including Chinese-Australians, are expected to be honest. However, she felt that many Chinese students and/or Chinese-Australians in Australia whilst being honest are different from those living in China. They seem to be less likely to help others, including Chinese students and/or Chinese-Australians, which is not the case in China.

Here most Chinese students have a good family financial condition, and ... they are doing a Bachelor or Master course. ... Their quality should be better. ... We also should communicate honestly. ... Yet, they will not do something for you or get themselves involved in any personal affairs. ... I wonder whether my friend can introduce jobs to me. ... He is not like an ordinary Chinese, who likes to say ‘no problem, I will help you find a job’. ... Chinese-Australians are calm, and they only talk business itself, and they would not like to promise you anything. (Malu)

These changes reveal that Chinese students and/or Chinese-Australians have changed to some extent, after they lived in Australia for some time. This can exemplify that, as I predict, Chinese students will gradually change as well, after they stayed in Australia for a couple of years. These changes are a positive response to the accumulation curve proposed by Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) that I discussed in Chapter Two. Similarly, Chinese students may regard themselves as being bicultural, and it is a necessary path to their hybrid identity. All these changes reveal to us that Chinese students, at least some of them, have already changed and become bi-cultural, although they didn’t mention that they achieved a sense of hybrid identity in my interviews.

In Australia, diverse factors may impact on Chinese students’ becoming identity. For example, Alex felt that one’s becoming identity is a result of interactions of different cultural backgrounds and outlooks. He maintained that geographically and culturally Chinese students are heterogeneous, which generates the likelihood that there will be great diversity in their identity development and performances whilst in Australia.

First ... everyone is different in his/her outlook of the world, life and value. Some students come from big cities like Beijing and Shanghai, but some come from small cities like Guizhou (Guizhou is a province located in Southwest China but not a city. Here the city name may be Guiyang, a capital city of Guizhou province) or small cities in Jiangsu province. ... I come from a small place, and those Chinese students from big cities may think that they have nothing common to talk to me. ... I have more topics to communicate with these students from small cities. (Alex)

Shao argued that Chinese students’ becoming identity is related to their lived spaces in Australia. Some differences such as inconvenient public transport, lack of social contacts with other (Chinese) students, and distinctive living experiences in China and Australia bring about diverse identity transformation in communication practices.
In China we are in a city. ... We can go anywhere for fun. In Australia it is different. ... Melbourne is a big city, and it is not convenient to travel here and there. Another point is ... entertainment is rather different from China. ... Fishing or catching crabs? ... You cannot do this every day. ... Or going to Casino? ... If you lose money, you will not feel happy. ... We only play games at home. ... Such few contacts may lead to differences, and personal relationships ... are not like in China. ... The life is different. ... Our opinions are different, and our thinking is different. (Shao)

With regard to interpersonal relationship development in Australia, these participants reported that Chinese students normally turn to a Chinese community if/when they encounter an unhappy event. For instance, Rock said that Chinese students would seek help from a fellow Chinese person, if they need someone to communicate with.

If you want to find a listener who can understand you or who knows what you are talking about ..., if you want to ... find a sense of belonging, you will communicate with someone from the same country rather than a foreign friend. ... You then will have a sense of being recognised. ... It is easier to be recognised by someone from the same place rather than from another country. (Rock)

These participants feel identity transformation in communication with other Chinese students and/or Chinese-Australians in Australia. These changes are representations of their becoming identity. Some students realise that these changes are caused by their everyday practices in Australia. Facing these changes, some Chinese students ignore them and keep close to their primary identity; while some Chinese students start to accept them in everyday life. These changes are a signal of Chinese students’ identity work, and they are consistent with the contention that ‘possible change in Discourses and the emergence of new ones can open up possibilities for resistance to domination and hegemony’ (Gee 1992, 111). It is quite possible that these changes in everyday life will trigger Chinese students’ identity work, moving toward a hybrid identity.

Identity is ‘a mode of thinking about ourselves’ (Barker 2008, 217). This mode in essence is a form of cultural practice, since one’s identity work is always influenced by culture. Gee (1996, 84) suggests using ‘cultural models’, ‘self-judgments’ and ‘actual behaviors’ to discuss the relationships among them. To me, ‘cultural models’ mean different cultures; ‘self-judgments’ is one’s identity work and ‘actual behaviors’ are one’s performances in everyday practices. The different cultural models of different social and cultural groups of people always involve ‘competing notions of what counts as “acceptable” or “valuable” person or deed’ (Gee 1996, 84). As such, one’s cultural models influence how one judges oneself, including others, and they also influence an individual’s performances in a particular lived space.

Located in secondary Discourses, Chinese students’ cultural models, including their cultural models acquired in primary Discourses, are all influenced greatly. The new cultural models, as culture or ideology embedded in their secondary Discourses, drive Chinese students to accept them and eliminate the influence of their previous cultural models. Meanwhile, their actual behaviours or everyday performances in secondary Discourses are likely to be influenced as well. As a result, Chinese students’ cultural and behavioural changes will trigger changes in their self-judgments or identity work. Also, their becoming identity is probably unavoidable in their secondary Discourses.
8.4. Conclusion
This chapter is focused on two themes of Chinese students’ institutional identity in Australia. The first theme was concerned with presenting diverse portraits of Chinese students’ institutional identity from three perspectives. The first perspective involved summarising the portraits represented as Chinese students’ institutional identity. I also discussed their portraits from the perspective of their self and their (imagined) Others. The second theme was focused on Chinese students’ identity transformation in Australia. On the one hand, I explored Chinese students’ identity transformation felt by themselves. On the other hand, I examined how Chinese students felt about identity transformation in everyday communication with other Chinese students and/or Chinese-Australians. The subsequent discussions aimed to shed light on my examination of Chinese students’ identity work in Australia.

Essentially, in Australia Chinese students’ institutional identity is a product of their communication practices under different cultural models – at least two sets of cultural models: one is Chinese cultural models acquired in their primary Discourses, and the other is the new cultural models that they are acquiring in their secondary Discourses. Cultural models ‘carry within them values and perspectives on people and on reality. Cultural models from different sociocultural groups can conflict in their content, in how they are used, and in the values and perspectives they carry’ (Gee 1996, 88). Influenced by different cultural models, Chinese students’ communication practices thus become more complex. For instance, their hesitation – to speak or not to speak in class communication – is an example suggesting that they are influenced by two sets of cultural models in their host context. On the one hand, they may speak in class, since they, influenced by the cultural models acquired in secondary Discourse, should try to act as ‘recognisable’ or ‘right’ before others, including before themselves. On the other hand, they may not speak, as they, influenced by the cultural models in their primary Discourses, should not express critical opinions publicly. The two sets of cultural models are often problematic for Chinese students, represented in their everyday communication and identity work.

Chapter Nine is focused on Chinese students’ cultural identity and national identity. I start with an exploration of Chinese students’ sense of being marginalised and their sense of belonging in new lived space. Their sense of being marginalised and sense of belonging are supposed to be related to their identity work, and they are also supposed to be related to their cultural identity and national identity. Next, I discuss Chinese students’ cultural identity and national identity. These identities it is proposed bring influences upon Chinese students’ everyday communication in Australia.
CHAPTER NINE
CHINESE STUDENTS’ CULTURAL IDENTITY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

9.1. Introduction
In Chapter Eight I discussed Chinese students’ institutional identity. I first categorised the portraits of institutional identity represented by Chinese students. Next I described the portraits of their institutional identity from the perspective of their self – how Chinese students perceive their institutional identity in communication. Given that the Other is a lens to see the self, I also discussed different portraits of Chinese students’ institutional identity from the perspective of their imagined Others. These steps aimed to capture as full a portrait of Chinese students’ institutional identity as possible. Identity is ‘a process of becoming built from points of similarity and difference’ (Barker and Galasiński 2001, 30), and I then discussed Chinese students’ identity transformation in their secondary Discourses. On the one hand, their identity changes are felt by Chinese students themselves. On the other hand, they also recalled their communication with other Chinese students and/or Chinese-Australians to capture their identity changes. These changes are representations of their becoming identity. This chapter is focused on Chinese students’ cultural identity and national identity. It should be clarified that Chinese students’ cultural identity and national identity are to some extent overlapping, and my division is for the sake of discussion. Given that cultural identity can be understood as ‘the emotional significance that we attach to our sense of belonging or affiliation with the larger culture’ (Ting-Toomey 1999, 30), structurally, I first discuss Chinese students’ sense of being marginalised in Australia. Next I examine their sense of belonging in Australia, mainly in University X. Chinese students’ dissatisfaction with their university services is represented as a perspective that helps demonstrate that university services are related to their sense of belonging and identity work. I also explore Chinese students’ cultural identity from their responses to Chinese festivals and Australian festivals, and consider how their cultural festivals influence cultural identity and communication practices in Australia. Finally, I explore Chinese students’ national identity and how it influences their everyday communication.

9.2. The Sense of Identity: A Marginalised Group?
The arrival of a large number of international students, including Chinese students, has greatly promoted the internationalisation of higher education in Australia. Today, Australian universities are assumed to be multicultural institutions for international education practices. ‘The word “international” as applied to students and other people is sometimes used as a mark of “otherness”. Since “we” form a preferred group, anyone outside is in some way less highly valued’ (Pearce 1998, 54). In this section, whether Chinese students, enrolled as ‘international students’ in University X, feel they are being marginalised and ‘less highly valued’ are discussed. First of all, it must be pointed out that not all Chinese students have a sense of being marginalised in their university. For instance, Alex said that he did not have any sense of being marginalised. He explained that only those Chinese students who do not often communicate with others may feel marginalised. Whether you have a sense of being marginalised depends on your effort to communicate with...
others. For example, some students do not like to communicate with others, and the result must be like that. But if you catch every chance to communicate with others, including with Chinese, Indians or the local, more or less, you will not be marginalised. (Alex)

However, some Chinese participants indicated that they often have a sense of being marginalised. For instance, Rock said that his life was not as the same as he would wish; he felt that he is an outsider.

I feel that I am still a Chinese student and I do not have such a process of changing from a student to an Australian. ... Originally my idea is to completely immerse myself into the local culture and freely cross two cultures. ... But now I am still in Chinese culture, and I do not feel that I have built up a bridge with Australia. ... It is not a problem to come and live independently here, but the big challenge is how to communicate with the local and how to let others accept me as a member of their society rather than just as an international student. (Rock)

Rock also said that he lived in a non-mainstream community, although he had tried to enter the mainstream community. Rock felt that in University X Australian students stand for the mainstream community; yet, he felt that he was largely refused entry.

I feel that the non-mainstream circle is my mainstream, but the mainstream society, to me, at least now, is too far. It is even too far to get there ... because the circle, which we regard it as a mainstream, is still being rejected. For instance, there are many social activities for international students in University X. ... But you will find that the number of local students ... is not many. Rather, most participants are international students. In that case, you may feel that you are in a mainstream circle, but such a mainstream just consists of the non-mainstream students. ... I just stay in a university circle, since most people I contact are international students, rather than Australian students. (Rock)

Similarly, Shao also argued that, as a Chinese student in Australia, it is common to be marginalised before entering the mainstream society. He offered two reasons that may lead to a sense of being marginalised: one reason is that most Chinese students do not have good English proficiency and English communication competence, and it is difficult for them to have in-depth communication with Australians; the other reason is these students lack certain understanding of Australian culture and society. Only by learning local culture can Chinese students enter the authentic mainstream society.

It is impossible to enter the mainstream society. ... If you want to enter the mainstream society, you must learn how to communicate. But the priority is that you must excel in English language. It does not simply mean four 7, or even 9 in your IELTS examination. ... You should follow their way of thinking, clothes, food, and accommodation and travelling, including your opinions, your experiences, and the news happened yesterday. ... Sure, it is cultural difference. ... To me ... I have just stayed for two to three years ... and I feel it is still very difficult. (Shao)

Chinese students’ sense of being marginalised is largely caused by their insufficient English proficiency and their limited English communication competence. If they are not able to communicate with Australian students, they often feel that they cannot be accepted by the mainstream society in Australia. Another reason is that they just live in their ivory tower and so lack an understanding of Australian society and culture. As such, their limited social contacts make them just stay in a Chinese community, and then they often feel being marginalised.

‘The values of mainstream culture are, in fact, often complicit with the opposition of
non-mainstream students’ home cultures and other social identities’ (Gee 1996, 89). It is not strange that Chinese students feel like outsiders in new cultural space. Such a sense implies that they are still strongly tied to Chinese cultural identity and that their new cultural identity has not been achieved. It should be noted that some measures need to be taken to help international students, of course including Chinese students, integrate into Australian culture and society, at least, into their university.

Chinese students’ sense of being marginalised is likely to be involved in their identity work. Often standing at the edge of Australian society, these students may feel that they are just a bystander but not a member of Australian society. Their sense of being marginalised may make them feel that they still belong to their previous social and cultural spaces in China. Some Chinese students may feel that they should go back to their original spaces, which is one of the centripetal forces discussed in Chapter Ten.

9.3. Chinese Students’ Sense of Belonging
It is supposed to be difficult for Chinese students to achieve a sense of belonging since they normally just stay in Australia for a couple of years. Yet, the idea of identity was born out of ‘the crisis of belonging’ (Bauman 2004, 20). One’s identity is often related to his/her sense of belonging in a new lived space. In this section, I explore Chinese students’ sense of belonging in Australia so as to understand their identity work.

Chinese students’ sense of belonging does exist among these participants, but it is only recognised by Alex. Alex expressed his sense of belonging to his university. He explained that one reason is that he had just finished his course. The other reason was that he communicated frequently with his university colleagues.

I have a sense of belonging. … I put up a metal inscription of my graduation certificate on the wall. … After all, it is my first overseas university, and here I had a wonderful one and a half years’ Master course, including getting to know many classmates and lecturers, and I still keep in touch with them. (Alex)

However, other participants did not have Alex’s sense of belonging. They talked about why they failed to achieve a sense of belonging in Australia. Firstly, Chinese students experience many difficulties in their daily life, and it is difficult to achieve a sense of belonging in Australia. For instance, Ivy regarded that her lack of a sense of belonging resulted from the difficulties she faced in her life, which also caused her much stress. She yearned to return to China.

In the future I will go back to the place that belongs to me, that is, China. ... I cannot accept the life here. It is not what I want. ... The stress is mainly psychological. ... I have to face many difficulties and handle everything by myself. ... I do have stress. ... When I come across difficulties, I really feel sacred. I fear that I cannot handle. (Ivy)

The second reason relates directly to Chinese students’ lack of social contacts beyond their university. Ivy admitted that she has few contacts with the outside world, and that her communication is restricted to her time on campus. She lacks an understanding of Australia, including a sense of belonging in Australia.

Interviewee: Although I am in Australia, I do not belong to it. ... The society doesn’t belong to me. ... Our communication circle is a problem.
Interviewer: There are some possibilities. For instance, someone may say that I am just a student, and my circle is small, and it is what we said ‘living in an ivory tower’. Is it because of this?
Interviewee: Yes, yes, it is like this. I feel that sometimes we want to do but we cannot.
Interviewer: You do not have time and energy to integrate into the society, so you just stay on your campus and study.
Interviewee: Yes, even if we sometimes find a part-time job, our communication is a little. (Ivy)

Thirdly, Chinese students’ sense of belonging is related to their lifestyle. For example, Shao argued that Chinese students’ rented house is a just temporary residency but not their home. Without a permanent residency or a stable residency, Chinese students often felt that it was difficult to achieve a sense of belonging in Australia.

My friend has moved for a few times, and every time the roommates are different, and it is hard to have a sense of belonging. ... We have certain feeling on the house and then have a sense of belonging. ... However, those people who often move cannot have any sense of belonging. (Shao)

Fourthly, Chinese students are deeply influenced by Chinese culture, and in Australia their lack of a sense of belonging is a consequence of their strong attachment to their Chinese family and culture. For instance, Ivy mentioned her parents’ influence upon her sense of belonging.

I feel that the sense of home should be defined like this: we have a sense of home wherever my parents stay with me. ... Yet, here I just think that I once was a University X student. (Ivy)

Apparently Ivy does not have a sense of belonging in her university. Rather, she just regards herself as a student in University X. For her, the sense of belonging only can be felt at home, where her parents live.

Chinese students’ lack of a sense of belonging in Australia often brings about their identity crisis. Some participants mentioned that their sense of being lost was due to the absence of a sense of belonging. For example, Jordan talked about his sense of being lost in Australia, and he wanted to go back to his familiar space in China.

That is, you are negotiating about where to go next. The sense of losing yourself is that you don’t know who you are and what you should do before you graduate. ... At that time I just wanted to go back. ... I even did not want to stay here for one more day. (Jordan)

Jordan also recalled his experience of returning to China. At that moment, he felt excitement as he was returning to his familiar social and cultural space. According to him, Chinese people have a strong sense of belonging to their familiar spaces and places. Only by going back to their spaces and places can they feel secure.

I couldn’t stand the life here, and I missed my family and friends, so I went home. At the second time, before I went home ... I felt that I was driving on the freeway to the airport. ... I do not know how to explain that. ... Maybe Chinese people have too strong sense of belonging. ... Once I think I will arrive home, I feel warm. ... I feel that I have something to rely on. (Jordan)

Some Chinese students believed their lack of a sense of belonging was due to the low level of personal commitment to their course in university. For instance, Shao believed his lack of a sense of belonging was caused by the sparse nature of his communication with lecturers.
I do not have a sense of belonging in University X. Honestly I am at the edge. ... I did not get any concern. ... Perhaps it is because of the educational system here. ... Lecturers ... just take us to the door, and they will leave after lectures. Only if you ask them questions, they will answer you. ... We lack communication. ... We cannot talk with lecturers since they leave soon. (Shao)

Similarly, Shao acknowledged that he was not committed to his university degree. He blamed himself for not being considered a top student academically. He imagined that this would help him feel he belonged, if he was recognised. In my interview, Shao was also critical that his university lacked a humanistic atmosphere, which made it difficult for Chinese students to achieve a sense of belonging.

If I am a top student, I will be recognised, as the university may feel proud of me. ... Even if I will graduate, I have not thought about whether I belong to here. Why? It is because the university lacks humanistic environment. ... If you hope that your students feel proud of your university, you must show your concern about students. ... I have a friend ... and he has always transferred from one university to another one in Australia. ... He did not have any reluctance to leave that university. That is to say, he has no feeling on that university. ... The university is not worth his feeling. ... The university ... has not taken any measures to ... attract him. (Shao)

‘Integration is a two-way process; you can’t become one with people who make you feel you don’t belong’ (Pan 1991, 246), which can be understood that one’s identity work is closely related to his/her sense of belonging in a particular social and cultural institution. If Chinese students do not have a sense of belonging in Australia, it is difficult for them to construct their identity as well.

In my interviews, Chinese participants discussed their responses to Australian higher education, which I assume is also related to their sense of belonging. According to these participants, their sense of belonging is related to what the university provides in the way of student services. These Chinese students were generally satisfied with their university’s services. For instance, Shao, Jordan and Rock agreed that University X helped them a good deal.

University X has provided a lot of services. ...Their speed of responding to my email is fast. I can contact them anytime regarding problems related to international students such as enrollment and sickness. ... Yes, my communication with them is fine. (Shao)

I think that they have done well. From the official website, I learn that they provide services such as medical care, psychological concern. When you miss family, when you are lonely, they provide help. ... They are thoughtful and their services are all-round. (Jordan)

They have provided conveniences for multicultural students. For instance, the facilities ... are multi-lingual. ... If you choose Chinese, your homepage will be in Chinese. It will be convenient to obtain materials. ... The facility and the platform will provide you with a multi-lingual environment. For instance, the clinic and the Student Union have multilingual services so that you can communicate. (Rock)

Alex also mentioned that his university tried to provide sound student services.

In terms of consumption and investment ... University X is not bad. For example, University X has successfully applied bus service from Box Hill Centro to the campus, which provides convenience for our life. Also, some hardware items such as the tram stop, the extension of campus park lot and the update of library computer facility, including teaches’ services, are all very good. (Alex)
However, some participants expressed dissatisfaction about their university in regard to course design, university services and the international education policy. According to these students, these factors were responsible for their lack of a sense of belonging.

Firstly, some Chinese students were not satisfied with their course design, since it did not give them the same academic learning advantages as native English speakers or other international students from English-speaking countries.

The international educational system should be more equal. ... They should pay more attention to international students. International students’ first language is not English. ... Perhaps it is why Guilao regard study as a part of their life. Since they study in their first language, they feel easy. ... We must work much harder to achieve what we want. ... I hope that they should slightly lower the benchmark. ... The requirements should be a bit lower. (Ivy)

Jordan also complained that his English language course was not well-designed, since international students, including him, still faced communication problems even after passing English language course.

There are problems in language course design. ... If you pass the examination, it just means that you have passed the test, but in fact your communication competence is the same. (Jordan)

Rock said that his course was not internationalised; instead, it was just designed to produce local talents rather than international talents.

I do not feel that students’ multi-cultural identity has been considered in their curriculum design. ... Yes, the education is just considered to serve the local society. ... The university will not consider that some students will go back to China or other countries. ... Here the education is still on the basis of the local needs. (Rock)

This exemplifies that ‘nations do not educate international students according to global rules’ (Marginson et al. 2010, 24). However, in an internationalised educational institution, ‘both curriculum content and design need to foster international and local perspectives of the discipline’ (Ryan 2005a, 94). It is not just a matter of adjusting or adding something to curriculum content so as to ensure that it suits international students, but making sure that all students, including local students, are able to gain global and international understandings in their education. Therefore, more attention should be given to these voices in the internationalised higher education practice.

The commercialisation of Australian higher education is seriously criticised as well by Chinese students, since they feel that they are treated as international education consumers in the commercialisation of the higher educational industry. It is accepted that today Australian higher education institutions need to recruit international students for development; However, ‘there remains a serious disjuncture between the quality of many of our graduates and the requirements of industry’ (Hil 2012, 197). This statement is confirmed and supported by these participants, and they worry about the quality of Australian higher education and their own academic reputation. For instance, Malu complained that Australian higher education was too commercial since the admission requirements in her Accounting course were low. She worried that those graduates cannot be endowed with qualified competence.
The Australian Master Accounting course doesn’t require that applicants must have a bachelor course background. ... It means that a layman may suddenly become a master. ... Perhaps this is a way to attract more students ... but it ignores the quality of graduates. ... After graduation ... he/she may not be competent with a qualified master. (Malu)

Secondly, two Chinese participants were not satisfied with the services offered in their university. Shao and Malu complained that University X did not provide quality services for Chinese students. According to them, at University X some student organisations did not accommodate the needs of Chinese students.

Figure 9.1: a university advertisement opposite Flinders Station, photo by Bin Ai

By promoting science and technology and producing more talents, Australian higher education commercialisation is unnoticeable, and it has become one of the largest industries in Australia.

It is sure that University X has provided services, but I did not see them. ... It should be clarified that you provide services and I am a consumer. ... You must know your consumers’ needs and then you can try to provide services. ... Your goal is to make me satisfied, but I do not think the university has done enough. (Shao)

In University X, the publicity of events ... is only limited in a small circle. They just send emails on the Internet. But many students don’t read emails frequently. ... The Student Union is not large, and I do not see that they are famous or they have organised any successful events. (Malu)

Thirdly, Chinese students interviewed were not satisfied with Australian international education policies, since the frequent changes of policies in Australia brought with them a number of difficulties for career planning. I understand that it is not easy to find a solution to solving these tricky problems when facing both global and local challenges in higher education practice. Yet, without good services, it is possible that Chinese students cannot achieve a sense of belonging. In the long run, it is impossible for them to achieve their institutional identity, not to mention their cultural identity in Australia.
I know that in Queensland, Adelaide and Perth, except for Melbourne and Sydney, international students can purchase half-price tickets. But for most international students living in Melbourne and Sydney, they cannot buy half-price tickets. It is very bad, since international students have contributed a lot to Australian economy, and they should have some welfare. (Alex)

I am not satisfied with the frequent changes of Australian international education policies. It is understandable since they must put their own nation and citizens at the first place. Yet, the policies ... shouldn’t always change. ... It is not good for my life plan. ... If you want achieve a win-win ending, you should also think for both parties. (Shao)

To summarise, Chinese students’ lack of a sense of belonging is related to their lived experiences such as their frequent move, their sense of being unrecognised and a perceived lack of concern for them by their university leaders. The lack of social contacts beyond university and their dissatisfaction with university services are also seen as negative factors. Some Chinese students even complained that their university does not take any measures to help them achieve a sense of belonging. These Chinese students’ lack of a sense of belonging in essence is a cultural issue. Their lack of a sense of belonging, including their sense of being marginalised as discussed earlier, is essentially related to their cultural and identity crisis in Australia.

Individuals can be understood as ‘the unique, historically specific, articulation of discursive elements that are contingent, but also socially determined or regulated’ (Barker and Galasiński 2001, 41). Identity is influenced by external elements, and it is made in particular social and cultural spaces. Living in a new cultural space, one’s world/space is formed by oneself, since ‘everyday individual entity forms, articulates his world, and in so doing forms himself as well’ (Heller 1984, 20). One needs to integrate into his/her new spaces/secondary Discourses, if possible. Of course, ‘it is in and through Discourses that we make clear to ourselves and others who we are and what we are doing at a given time and space’ (Gee 1996, 128). Once leaving these Discourses, we cannot have a sense of belonging before we achieve a new identity.

As I mentioned before, Chinese students’ lack of sense of belonging in essence is their identity crisis in secondary Discourses. The set of Chinese cultural models, as a key component in primary Discourses, plays a crucial role in maintaining their cultural identity, and this makes Chinese students often feel that they belong to their familiar space where their parents live. Their identity work in secondary Discourses will not be an easy process, in particular without a sense of belonging as their base. Yet, their lack of a sense of belonging in Australia helps me explain why Chinese students want to go back to their spaces/primary Discourses, which is discussed in Chapter Ten as a centripetal force that influences Chinese students’ identity negotiation.

9.4. Experiencing Cultural Identity
It is not surprising that Chinese students have an attachment to Chinese culture and their cultural identity during their stay in Australia. Earlier in this thesis it was found that Confucian culture and other Chinese cultural patterns influence Chinese students in respect to their academic learning, daily life and their sense of belonging. In this regard, I will now explore Chinese students’ cultural identity, in particular, from their experiences of cultural festivals, since complex relations are often displayed during such cultural festivals.
Festivals are always related to certain cultural features of a nation and the people of that nation. During cultural festivals cultural identity is supposed to be represented in selected communication practices. Conversely, we can explore one’s cultural identity through his/her communication practices during cultural festivals as well. In this section, I record how Chinese students spend Chinese cultural festivals and how they respond to Australian cultural festivals. Chinese participants’ responses and their experiences during these festivals help me trace their communication practices; they are representations of Chinese students’ cultural identity, including their identity negotiation, if there is any negotiation.

9.4.1. Responses to Chinese festivals
Generally young people like to celebrate festivals since they always can find some fun on these special days. When Chinese students move to Australia, do they still have a desire to celebrate Chinese festivals? Do they have a sense of being a Chinese during their cultural festivals? As Chinese students, how do they celebrate their festivals in Australia? These students recall their experiences during Chinese festivals.

Undoubtedly the most important cultural festival for ordinary Chinese is the Spring Festival. Given that the Spring Festival is calculated according to the Chinese lunar calendar, the date of the Spring Festival varies every year. During the Spring Festival Chinese students normally cannot go back to stay with their families, as the festival is often in the middle of university term. In my interviews, Chinese students report their experiences during their festivals, and so provide a window from which I can explore their cultural identity in Australia.

First of all, Chinese students admitted that they have a strong sense of their cultural identity during the Spring Festival, and they feel that they are Chinese in Australia. These students feel very happy, although they cannot go back to visit their family in person. For instance, Alex reported his experience on Chinese festivals (he has stayed in Australia for a couple of years and spent several Chinese Spring Festivals), and these festivals provided him with an opportunity to share Chinese culture with his classmates. He also mentioned that he missed his Chinese family on these occasions.

On these festivals ... I have a happy mood. ... I usually distribute little gifts to my lecturers and classmates ... and introduce Chinese traditional culture to them. Specifically I stay with Chinese students and we wrap Baozi (steamed bun with meat stuffing), Jiaozi, and make dishes and have talks on the traditional festival. ... I feel that I am a Chinese, although I am in Australia. (Alex)

Ivy talked about her experience on Chinese Spring Festival in Australia. At that time, she does not feel good as it is her first Spring Festival in Australia, without company of her parents. She celebrates the day in a Chinese traditional way, and then she has a strong sense of being a Chinese.

Last Chinese Spring Festival, I stayed in Australia and I felt very bad. It was like the Chinese saying ‘Meifeng Jiajie Beisiqin’ (people will miss family especially on festivals). It was the first year that I did not go home to stay with my family on the Chinese Spring Festival. I stayed with some Chinese students, and we went to a Chinese student’s house, cooked dishes and drank wine. ... We watched the Central China Television (CCTV) Spring Festival Party (for many Chinese people watching CCTV Party at the eve of the festival with family has become a cultural event now). ... At that time I had a very strong sense that I am a Chinese. (Ivy)
Jordan was excited when he talked about his experience on a Chinese Spring Festival in Australia. He recalled that on that day he prepared plenty of food so as to celebrate the festival in a traditional Chinese way. He acknowledged that during such special festival his identity is clearly Chinese, and he belongs to a Chinese social and cultural space, although he is physically located in Melbourne.

Chinese students usually prepare a bounteous dinner and celebrate the Chinese Spring Festival together. For them, it is also a representation of Chinese cultural identity in Australia.

I have experienced once the Chinese Spring Festival in Australia. ... We wrapped up Jiaozi, but we did not put up Duilian (the couplets of the Spring Festival). ... We cooked a lot of dishes such as chicken, duck, fish and pork, like in China. We drank and called Chinese family and said ‘Bainian’ (wish someone a Happy New Year) to them. ... At that time I did not belong to Melbourne but belonged to the Chinese space. (Jordan)
Malu also recalled her experience on the Chinese Spring Festival in Melbourne.

This Chinese Spring Festival is my second Spring Festival here, and I wrapped a lot of Jiaozi with friends at home. ... No matter how many Jiaozi we had ... it didn’t equal to celebrating the Spring Festival in China. ... But we felt happy when we stayed together. (Malu)

Rock and Shao both attested that traditional Chinese festivals are important, and they also have a strong sense of being Chinese on these traditional festivals.

It is very happy to celebrate Chinese traditional festivals in Australia. ... Once it comes to a festival, we will have a get-together. ... We could talk about our life in Australia, including in China. ... I have a stronger sense of being a Chinese. (Rock)

Shao compared his experience on the Spring Festival in Australia to his previous experience in China, and he admitted that he greatly enjoys celebrating this festival in Australia, although it is different from the festival spent in hometown. He misses his family on this day. I believe this signals that his cultural identity is attached to him.

At the last Chinese Spring Festival we made Jiaozi and drank together. I felt very happy. ... I have special feeling on these festivals. For example, there are no fireworks and crackers on the Chinese Spring Festival, no cold winter and no snow. ... My parents are in Xiangfan (another city in the north of Hubei province), and it snows there. It is strange without snow on the Spring Festival. ... I miss my family, especially on these festivals. (Shao)

Chinese students’ experiences and responses to their cultural festivals such as the Spring Festival reveal to us that their cultural identity is different from others. Their particular way of celebrating Chinese festivals represents cultural identity as well. The transition of their lived space has not yet eliminated their cultural identity produced in primary Discourses. As a matter of fact, ‘it is not possible to completely escape one’s “primary life” and the activities, worries, concerns and interpersonal relationships of day-to-day experience are carried to the second home and influence their life there’ (Perkins and Thorns 2012, 87). ‘One must speak and act and at least appear to think and feel in terms of these values and viewpoints while being in the Discourse; otherwise one doesn’t count as being in it’ (Gee 1992, 111). Chinese students’ lived experiences during cultural festivals reveal to us that they are heavily influenced by the set of cultural models acquired in primary Discourses. In ‘second home’, their cultural identity and its representation are still closely related to primary Discourses.

9.4.2. Responses to Australian festivals

If it is difficult for Chinese students to transform their cultural identity on the Spring Festival and other Chinese festivals, what is their attitude to Australian festivals? To explore these students’ cultural identity in Australia, I also examine how they respond to Australian festivals. In my interviews, these students admit that they usually do not celebrate the Australian festivals in Australia. ‘To refuse to participate would have been to set oneself apart from the community’ (Lefebvre 1991a); I thus suspect that culturally these participants are not involved into the local community.

These participants recall their experiences during Australian festivals and explain why they do not take part in these festivals. First of all, Chinese students usually do not need to celebrate Australian festivals, since culturally they are outsiders in Australia.
For example, Shao explained that he does not integrate into local society.

I do hope that I can, but I cannot. ... I cannot integrate myself into the society. (Shao)

Secondly, Chinese students feel that there is no atmosphere to celebrate Australian festivals. According to Ivy and Alex, the atmosphere on Australian festivals is not like that in China at all, so most students just regard Australian festivals as normal days.

I have not celebrated Australian festivals. ... There is not any atmosphere on the Christmas Day. ... But in China you can see the crowded people. ... On these festivals I clearly feel that I am different from others. ... Maybe it is caused by culture. (Ivy)

I have not celebrated Australian festivals. ... I do not think that they are my festivals. For example, the Australian National Day does not belong to me, since I am a Chinese and it does not have any meaning to me. (Alex)

Another response is that Chinese students do not understand the culture involved in Australian festivals because of cultural differences. Without a sense of belonging in Australia, Chinese students usually regard that Australian festivals are not related to them at all. For instance, Jordan recalled his experience on an Australian festival occasion, and he felt that there was nothing special on that day. He drinks with local people in the name of celebrating that festival, but he cannot understand them and their festivals.

Australian festival? ... It is like a normal day. ... I am not a participant. On these days Australians are happy, but it is nothing related to us. ... I am just a spectator. ... Australians like the Melbourne Cup Day. ... However, Chinese students ... normally will not go to see the match. ... I
tried to drink beer with them. ... But I could not understand them. ... I worked as a part-time worker on ... the Melbourne Cup Day. ... There were no customers. ... It was quiet. (Jordan)

Malu considered that she is just a spectator who witnessed how Australians celebrated their festival, but she did not join in their celebration.

Last May I went to see Jiangshi Youxing (Zombie Walk), and almost all the participants ... dressed up ... and put blood on their body with stage property. ... I was an observer. I could clearly feel this. ... I have not celebrated local festivals. Last year there was an ANZAC Day parade ..., but I just went to have a look and took a few photos. (Malu)

Rock regarded the Christmas Day as no more than a shopping day for Chinese students. That is, culturally Australian festivals are not special days for them.

To me, the Christmas Day is just for shopping, not a festival like the Chinese Spring Festival, the Mid-Autumn Day and the Dragon-Boat Festival, for us to get together to communicate with our family. As a Chinese, surely we concern more about Chinese festivals. ... On the Chinese Lantern Festival I drove to more than ten stores to buy Tangyuan (sweet dumpling) ... and ... delivered it to everyone. ... We all felt being at home. ... Usually we have a quiet day on local festivals. (Rock)

To summarise these participants’ attitudes and experiences during Chinese festivals and Australian festivals, it can be seen that they are still keen on Chinese festivals in spite of living in Australia. They do not have desire to celebrate Australian festivals as well. Their responses also reveal to us that Chinese students usually do not accept Australian festivals, nor do they achieve a new cultural identity in Australia. That is to say, their Chinese cultural identity is still strongly attached to them.

However, some participants reveal their interest and curiosity about Australian festivals and culture. For instance, Jordan tries to drink with Australians, and Malu goes to see the celebration on Australian festivals. With regard to these performances, I believe that Alex’s comment below effectively summarises some participants’ views about Chinese students’ engagement in Australian festivals and culture, including Chinese festivals.

To be a person should be like a Chinese ancient bronze coin, ‘Waiyuan Neifang’ (round outside and square inside. It implies that one is smooth and easy-going in manners but highly principled in daily life). ‘Square’ means that you have certain principles, and ‘round’ means that you are able to embrace a lot. Wherever you meet someone with different opinions, at home or abroad, it is fine for something not serious; but for something else, it can never change at the bottom of your heart. (Alex)

Alex uses a Waiyuan-Neifang Chinese ancient bronze coin as a metaphor to describe his attitude to Australian festivals and culture. ‘Waiyuan’ implies that Chinese students should not simply reject Australian festivals and Australian culture while keeping Chinese culture, including their cultural identity. ‘Neifang’ means Chinese students should keep their principles. In fact, some Chinese students do not simply refuse Australian festivals and culture; conversely, they participate in them in certain way, at least, as a spectator. For instance, Jordan drinks with some Australians on the Melbourne Cup Day; Malu takes photographs as a spectator at the Zombie Walk. These Chinese students’ responses and experiences are examples to show us that, culturally and practically, they are not only ‘Waiyuan’ but also ‘Neifang’. On the one hand, they keep their culture, including cultural identity; on the other hand, they do
not refuse to be involved in some way with Australian culture. Alex’s philosophic comments provide us with cues to understand Chinese students’ cultural identity and their internal identity work.

If we agree that ‘being-as-event must be therefore lived through, and not passively comprehended from afar’ (Gardiner 2000, 50), Chinese students’ lived experiences provide them with opportunities to learn and even immerse themselves in Australian culture, consciously and/or subconsciously, actively and/or passively. A Discourse can ‘call for one to accept values in conflicts with other Discourses of which one is also a member’ (Gee 1992, 112). Living in-between Discourses, certain conflicts may occur on Chinese students. However, ‘Waiyuan Neifang’ provides them with a philosophic perspective to reflect their cultural identity, and such a philosophic attitude is likely to urge Chinese students’ identity work as well. Specifically, it is likely to bring about a hybrid identity for them in-between their lived spaces.

9.5. National Identity

National identity is not mysterious at all, since it is ‘emergent in day-to-day practices’ (Block 2007b, 170). National identity plays a role in everyday life, and it ‘affects how you behave, your expectations, your relations with others and, more importantly perhaps, other’s relations with you. … Your national identity, in no small way, makes up who you are. … but, in fact, it is your culture that creates your nationality’ (Eaglestone 2002, 109). As such, national identity is created in cultural acquisition, in which ‘education is usually seen as an important tool in the construction of national identity’ (Swain 2005, 2). Immersed in Chinese education practice and ideology for a long time, although they are now living in Australia, Chinese students are assumed to have already achieved their sense of national identity before coming to Australia.

In my interviews, I discussed with my participants so as to explore how their national identity influences their everyday life in Australia. Firstly, Chinese students have complex attitudes to their national identity, and they instinctively defend their nation. These participants like to argue, or at least use their silence, to show dissatisfaction and anger when China is criticised. Yet, when discussing China-related issues within an insider circle, they can express certain dissatisfaction. It is a typical representation of Chinese students’ national identity. For example, Alex indicated that, although he was sometimes critical of China, he would defend China, if it was criticised by outsiders. This signals his allegiance to national identity and Chinese culture.

As for the traditional and excellent stuff, I have not changed. … I read a lot from different media, and I can make my own judgment. … We are foreigners in Australia. If someone criticises us, we are not happy. We have a tradition to protect our weakness. … But we can criticise ourselves. … As a Chinese I hope that our nation can develop better and every Chinese can live a harmonious and happy life. (Alex)

Secondly, Chinese students’ national identity drives them to go back to China for the sake of keeping their cultural roots. For instance, Ivy will not give up her Chinese nationality, even if one day she chooses to stay in Australia. She admitted that her cultural roots are in China, and her national identity cannot be renounced as well.

Wherever we go, we are Chinese. … I am not sure whether I can use the word ‘ethnocentrism’ to describe it. Maybe the word is too strong, but, more or less, it is a bit close to the meaning that I want to express. … I have experienced negotiation. A few months ago, I hesitated … since many
people around me were preparing for applying permanent residency. ... Maybe I should follow
them and stay here. ... Even if I get permanent residency, I will not immigrate. If I immigrate here,
I will lose my Chinese nationality. I will not be a Chinese. ... I will not use Chinese language. ... Yet,
essentially we are Chinese, and it will be very sad if we cannot write down our name given by
parents. ... It is better to go back to China ... yes, because of the sense of traditional root. My root
is there, and I want to go back to there. (Ivy)

Figure 9.4: a Chinese student is presenting at the 62nd Anniversary of the Founding of the
People’s Republic of China in Melbourne, photo provided by Jordan

Chinese students are sometimes invited to attend political events in the host country. They can
experience their national identity and cultural identity at these events.

Thirldy, Chinese students’ national identity influences their communication practices
in Australia. Some participants claimed that Chinese national identity gives them
confidence in their daily life. For instance, Shao believed that China was his back-up
and he always regarded himself as a Chinese. The quick development of China made
him feel proud and confident. He felt that his national identity would stay with him
forever.

I have a strong identity sense of being a Chinese in Australia. ... I only define myself as a Chinese
international student. ... I feel I have some back-up in political and economic fields. ... If you do
not want to be bullied, first of all, you must be strong. Now China ... is becoming stronger and
stronger. ... This makes me feel confident to say that I am a Chinese, no matter where I go. (Shao)

Fourthly, national identity is considered as a force that always drives Chinese students
to go back to China. Their attachment to national identity makes these students feel a
sense of betrayal if giving up Chinese nationality. In my interviews, Baixue and
Jordan expressed allegiance to national identity. Baixue argued it would be a betrayal
to renounce her Chinese nationality, and she will not do it. Jordan hesitated when
asked would he stay in Australia after graduating, which indicates that he is struggling
to decide what to do.
I don’t like a sense of betrayal. If I join Australian nationality, I will have a sense of betray and I will not feel comfortable. … I want to get permanent residency, but I don’t want to get an Australian nationality. … It is a paradox … because China is a place where I was born. No matter where I go, that is my home. When I return there, I feel calm and safe. (Baixue)

Who am I in Australia? I am thinking about this question these days. During my first half a year … I feel that I am a Chinese. Yet, now facing my graduation … what should I choose next? To be a Chinese or to be an Australian? Should I stay here or should I go back to China? … I do not know whether I should belong to China or Australia. (Jordan)

Finally, national identity is not eliminated by Chinese students’ spatial changes. Today technology development makes it possible for Chinese students easily cross national boundaries to communicate with Chinese family and friends; yet, the sense of their national identity is not affected by the change of space and place. For instance, Rock claimed that he does not feel different in his sense of national identity, since he still can easily contact his family and friends via the Internet, as if he were living in China.

I feel that I just change a place but still sit in my room. … Here communication is convenient, since the Internet is over-developed. … You can go to QQ (a Chinese social network) and talk to them on the video, and then you will not miss your family too much. The greatest pain is homesickness … but the Internet can help you solve this problem, and then you will not feel different. … You will feel that your communication in Australia is just like in China. (Rock)

Chinese students’ national identity is maintained, although they are influenced by the new cultural models in their secondary Discourses. These students’ allegiance to their national identity exemplifies that national identity ‘was never like other identities.
Unlike other identities that did not demand unequivocal allegiance and exclusive fidelity, national identity would not recognise competition, let alone an opposition’ (Bauman 2004, 22). Chinese students’ allegiance to their national identity is reflected in their everyday communication practices as well. Some Chinese students do not get themselves involved in Australian culture and society, and their everyday life is still mostly confined to Chinese community, which helps them keep national identity. Some Chinese students fear a sense of betrayal, if they abandon their nationality and cultural roots. Yet, thanks to the developed technology, Chinese students are able to cross national boundaries and communicate with their family and friends in China, which is another reason why some Chinese students keep their national identity. Chinese students’ allegiance to their national identity is also expected to influence their identity negotiation, as discussed in Chapter Ten.

9.6. Conclusion
In this chapter I discussed Chinese students’ cultural identity and national identity, and how these identities influence their communication practices in Australia. I started from Chinese students’ sense of being marginalised and then moved to their sense of belonging in their lived space. My discussions show us that most Chinese students have a sense of being marginalised, and they feel it difficult to achieve a sense of belonging in Australia. Next, I discussed Chinese students’ cultural identity from the perspective of their lived experiences and responses to Chinese festivals and Australian festivals. On the one hand, Chinese students are excited to celebrate their Chinese festivals; on the other hand, some students reveal indifference to Australian festivals. It thus can be seen that Chinese students are heavily influenced by Chinese cultural identity, although they live in a host cultural space. I also borrowed a Chinese student’s Waiyuan-Neifang to argue that there is the possibility that Chinese students could achieve a hybrid identity. Finally, I discussed Chinese students’ national identity and its influence on their communication practices. Chinese students are found to have great allegiance to their national identity, and their everyday communication is influenced by national identity as well.

In the following chapter, I discuss Chinese students’ identity negotiation as a part of their identity work. I borrow Bakhtin’s terms ‘centripetal’ and ‘centrifugal’ to refer to the dialogic forces involved in their identity negotiation. To capture the details, I place Chinese students’ identity negotiation in a specific discourse: should they go back to China or should they stay in Australia at the end of their course? By a detailed analysis of the centripetal and centrifugal forces involved, I present a full picture of Chinese students’ identity negotiation in Australia.
CHAPTER TEN
CHINESE STUDENTS’ IDENTITY NEGOTIATION:
TO GO BACK OR TO STAY

10.1. Introduction
In Chapter Nine I discussed four aspects relating to Chinese students’ cultural identity and national identity. The first section was to explore Chinese students’ sense of being marginalised in lived space. In the second section I analysed these students’ sense of belonging in Australia. Next, by exploring their responses to Chinese festivals and Australian festivals, I examined their cultural identity in Australia. Finally, I discussed these students’ national identity and its influences upon their communication practices. Chinese students’ cultural identity, national identity, plus their institutional identity discussed in Chapter Eight, are all felt in their everyday communication, and their identity work and communication practices also are mutually influenced.

This chapter is focused on the dialogic forces involved in Chinese students’ identity negotiation in Australia. To capture the details of their identity negotiation, I place their identity negotiation in an ‘imagined but practical’ discourse – when Chinese students are going to finish their course and make their decision of going back to China or staying in Australia. I use ‘imagined’ since not all the participants involved in this project were facing this decision at the time of the interview. Some of them are in the middle of their course, but they still respond in the interview by predicting what they might do. I use the term ‘practical’ since it is a reality that many Chinese students need to make such a decision at the end of their international student life.

In this chapter, Bakhtin’s terms ‘centripetal’ and ‘centrifugal’ are borrowed to refer to the opposing and interactive forces involved in Chinese students’ identity negotiation. Bakhtin (1981b, 270) used the centripetal forces when referring to ‘the forces that serve to unify and centralise the verbal-ideological world’, or a unitary language. ‘Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward’ (Bakhtin 1981b, 272). That is, ‘within language there is always at work a centripetal force which aims at centralizing and unifying meaning. … This centripetal force in discourse is put to use by any dominant social group to impose its own monologic, unitary perceptions of truth. However, always working against that centralizing process is a centrifugal force – the force of heteroglossia – which stratifies and fragments ideological thought into multiple views of the world’ (Morris 1997, 15).

Bakhtin produces a dynamic account of language which sees it pulled in two opposite directions: ‘centripetally, towards the unitary centre provided by a nation of a “national” language; and centrifugally, towards the various languages which actually constitutes the apparent but false unity of a national language’ (Dentith 1995, 35). The conception of language as dynamically pulled ‘between centre and periphery, between unitary national forces and heteroglossia, at once described the tensions that are holding together and pulling apart a language at any one time, and also the same forces which, in given social, economic, political, artistic and educational histories, are producing the multiple changes that constitutes the history of a language’ (Dentith 1995, 35). All these discussions regarding language also lay a foundation for my examination of the diverse forces involved in Chinese students’ identity negotiation.
Inspired by Bakhtin’s thought, I assume that it is likely that there are centripetal and centrifugal forces involved in Chinese students’ identity negotiation, simultaneously and dynamically pushing them to return to primary Discourses in China and pulling them to stay in secondary Discourses in Australia. These co-existing forces in Chinese students’ identity negotiation are thought to be dialogic, since the logic of Bakhtin’s simultaneity is – dialogic (Holquist 1990).

To capture the complexity of Chinese students’ identity negotiation in Australia, if I borrow Lefebvre’s (1991b) terms, their identity negotiation originates in-between their ‘conceived space’, ‘perceived space’, and ‘lived space’; if I borrow Gee’s (1996) terms, their identity negotiation originates in-between their ‘primary Discourses’ and ‘secondary Discourses’; if I borrow Bakhtin’s (1984) terms, their identity negotiation originates in-between ‘self’ (insideness) and ‘others’ (outsideness). All the centripetal and centrifugal forces arise from Chinese students’ identity negotiation of going back to ‘first home’ in China or staying in ‘second home’ in Australia. In fact, the everyday life of Chinese students is a process of their looking for ‘second home’ in Australia. Yet, some students may have not found a ‘second home’, but some students may have found a sense of ‘second home’. Another point that I need to clarify is that one’s ‘first and second homes bound together’ (Perkins and Thorns 2012, 86), and hence these centripetal and centrifugal forces involved mutually influence each other in Chinese students’ identity negotiation.

Identity itself is ‘a “hotly contested concept”’. Whenever you hear that word, you can be sure that there is a battle going on’ (Bauman 2004, 77). Chinese students’ identity is also supposed to be full of negotiation. To go back to China or to stay in Australia may thus often become a question for Chinese students at the end of their university course. Such identity negotiation for some Chinese students may start on their first day in Australia, or even before they come to Australia. During their stay in Australia, Chinese students are supposed to be living in their identity negotiation. In my interviews, these participants admitted their identity negotiation was occurring.

I ... I feel very contradictory now. Really, I am in a very contradictory state. (Jordan)

Honestly (stopped for a while) ... you see, I have stopped a while, as I am not sure about this topic. It is not possible to ensure that I can stay here. ... Yes, I want. ... Yes, I have hesitation. I cannot definitely say that I must stay here, and I cannot say that I must go back either. ... Hesitation is because of my future life. ... I am still thinking about it. ... Yes, where is my home? I am thinking about where I should settle down. (Shao)

I wonder why I come out to study. Do I just want to get a diploma and go back to China? Or do I want to get evidence that I have once come here? This evidence is a green card (the permanent residency). I have thought a lot about this question. ... It is likely to have some fluctuations in my heart. (Ivy)

Yes, I had been negotiating with myself even before I come here. ... Yet I do not know how to solve this problem. (Baixue)

From these participants’ hesitation and negotiation, I note that their identity is a concrete goal to achieve, and such an object influences their everyday life as well. When they face their identity negotiation, it is understandable that there are complex
forces involved in it. In my interviews, Chinese students express their arguments for and against staying in Australia in their identity negotiation processing. These I have accepted as the centripetal and centrifugal forces.

10.2. Centripetal Forces to Go Back to China
As I mentioned before, I have utilised Bakhtin’s terms ‘centrifugal’ and ‘centripetal’ to explore the complex forces involved in Chinese students’ identity negotiation. The centrifugal and centripetal forces exist simultaneously, and play opposing roles and influence each other. In this section, I apply centripetal forces to refer to the forces that drive Chinese students to go back to their primary Discourses, their first home in China, after they stay a couple of years in Australia. Generally, four centripetal forces are involved in Chinese students’ identity negotiation, which consist of Qinqing (family relationship), personal future career, Chinese culture and national identity.

10.2.1. Qinqing
In the interviews, Qinqing is frequently alluded to. As a Chinese student in Australia, I understand that Qinqing means Chinese students’ strong emotional attachment to their family and relatives in China. Here the concept of family does not just refer to a nuclear family but an extended family in Chinese traditional culture. Alex, Baixue and Shao mentioned that Qinqing was an influential centripetal force in their identity negotiation.

I go back to seek a job because of Qinqing, and Qinqing is always at the first place for me. My parents are at senior age now, and there must be someone to look after them. ... I am the only child in my family. ... I have responsibility to stay along to devote Xiao (filial piety) to them. (Alex)

Interviewee: I cannot find a friend to listen to me. ... It is not like in China. ... I can easily find a night stand, or a tea bar, and ... have a chat with friends. Yet, here it is impossible to do these. ... My life is lonely and solitary here, so I want to go back to China.
Interviewer: Is it because your parents are living there or because you are familiar with that environment?
Interviewee: Both. (Baixue)

It has a very strong relationship to the fact that my parents are in China. ... In China ... the sense of family is very strong, and the family does not just mean your small family like your wife, your son, and your parents but your whole extended family. ... In Australia I feel that their relationship is not so strong. (Shao)

According to these Chinese students, one influential force in their identity negotiation is Qinqing. After all, their parents and friends are living in China. Some participants even stressed that it was the influence of Chinese parents, as a centripetal force, that often drives them to go back to China.

My parents don’t have any intervention. ... Yet, at the bottom of their heart, they still hope that their children can stay around them. (Ivy)

Interviewee: My parents say that it is better to stay here, but they have already taken more actions than what I have done here. They have started to arrange my job without telling me. ... Interviewer: They have got everything ready for you, and then you feel that your parents are expecting you to go back. ... In other words, you feel that they are waiting for your return. ... Interviewee: Yes. (Jordan)
Interviewer: Do your parents have a large influence upon your life and study in Australia?
Interviewee: ... The influence is not too much. ... It does not mean that our parents will demand us to do something, but we will do what we would like to do.
Interviewer: Is it an intuitive response?
Interviewee: Yes. ... From my perspective, I have to think for them. If I stay in Australia, I will invite them to come here. However, if I bring them here, they will feel lonely, as they have no relatives and friends to communicate. ... As I grow up, they become old and old. I feel that at least there should be someone to look after them. ... When Guilao is over 18, they will live a different life from their parents. Yet, in China the tradition still exists. (Ivy)

Influenced by Qinqing, to go back to look after their parents is an intuitive response for Chinese students. Indeed, they regard Qinqing as an obligation, and they can never refuse the mission to go back.

10.2.2. Future career

In my interviews Chinese participants admitted that it is rather difficult to find a job in Australia, and they choose to go back to China as a way to reach their dreams. That is, these students’ decision of going back to China or staying in Australia is related to their future career. For instance, Jordan felt that it is easier to find a job and fulfill his dream in China after experiencing many difficulties in his job-hunting in Australia. The cruel and harsh reality in Australia drives some students like Jordan to go back to China, where they can get help from their family and friends.

After looking for a job for about two months, I find that it is difficult to realise my dream in Australia. ... It would be better if I go back to China to fulfill my dream. ... If I go back, I am sure that I can get a job. ... I assume that it will be easier to realise my dream because I have some conditions and approaches. (Jordan)

Shao also presented his argument for going back to China, based on his assessment of future development of China and Australia. According to Shao, China’s development makes him believe that, if he goes back to China, he can tie his future to this country’s development. Of course, he is optimistic about the future of his country and himself.

China is independent, and it has its influence. ... Yet, Australia, when it comes to politics, does not have a strong intention, and it always changes. ... It is not like China. ... Politically, Australia is always swaying. This means that Australia cannot be determined by itself. ... Economically ... now Australia’s economy is fine. Yet, who knows after twenty years? ... China is different, and China has its own position. ... I will have a better life in China. (Shao)

10.2.3. Influence of Chinese culture

The influence of Chinese culture as one of centripetal forces plays a decisive role in Chinese students’ identity negotiation. Culturally, they have a strong motive to go back to their first home. Here ‘going home’ means ‘returning to that firm position which we know, to which we are accustomed, where we feel safe, and where our emotional relationships are at their most intense’ (Heller 1984, 239). Living in their second home, Chinese students’ ‘attachment to the homeland can be intense’ (Tuan 1977, 149). Going back to China is an instinctive choice for Chinese students, and the instinct is produced by Chinese culture, since Chinese students can find their familiar cultural spaces if going back.

In my interviews, Jordan and Shao maintained they should go back after graduation, since they still belonged to China.
Subconsciously I feel that I should go back. I will go back but not stay here. ... I have sentimental feeling on this place, after I stay here for two years. ... But I am eager to go back to China. ... Yes, I belong to that place. (Jordan)

Shao used an idiom ‘Luoye Guigen’ (a person residing elsewhere finally returns to his native land) to prove that it is nature that drives Chinese students to return to their first home. He insisted that he will go back to China in the future. It can be seen that Chinese culture has been bred into Chinese students, and its influence is always felt by them. In other words, Chinese culture has produced these participants’ cultural identity, which always drives them to return to their primary cultural space, consciously and/or subconsciously.

The reason that I don’t want to stay here is that, after all, I come from China. There is an old saying, Luoye Guigen. ... Yes, this is why I want to go back. (Shao)

Figure 10.1: a corner of a Chinese-Australian community, photo by Bin Ai

Many Chinese students like visiting Box Hill Centro, a Chinese community at Melbourne, as they can find Chinese food, jobs and Chinese-language services. More importantly, they can achieve a sense of being as a Chinese there.

I also need to note that ‘the ideological weight of Confucian principles remains and has been reinforced by the Communisis experience’ (Price 2000, 88) in today’s China. Some Chinese students are not only influenced by Chinese culture but also Chinese ideology. For example, Alex indicated that when reading classical Chinese works, he was influenced subconsciously by Chinese culture, even in Australia.

To me, Confucianism or Chinese traditional culture has an impact upon me. In my room I have books by Kongzi (Confucius), Mengzi (Mencius) and some prose by The Eight Famous Writers in Tang and Song Dynasties, including Songci, on the bookshelf. I often read these ancient Chinese works. The influence also exists in my everyday work and life. (Alex)
Similarly, Ivy’s life is to a large extent mediated by Chinese communication characteristics. She predicted that the reason of going back to China is connected to Chinese culture and ideology. These students feel that the influence of Chinese culture and ideology is too strong to change in their life, and they hence choose to return to their cultural space.

I feel that the sense of being a Chinese student has a great influence on my communication. For example, we communicate with a Chinese style. ... Yes, it is an inculcation of ideology. ... Once it is formed, it is hard to change. (Ivy)

As I discussed in Chapter Three, ideology is not separated from the practical activities of everyday life. Rather, it is understood as ‘a material phenomenon rooted in day-to-day conditions’ (Barker 2008, 66). When Chinese students receive their education in China, they subconsciously accept the ideology embedded in it. After they come to Australia, they are influenced by the ideology integrated in Australian education as well. On the one hand, these students are united in their circle under the influence of Chinese ideology; on the other hand, they are also separated by different ideologies in Australia. In the end, influenced by Chinese culture and ideology, Chinese students choose to go back to China. Yet, I admit that the influence of ideology in Australian education practice is a centrifugal force that may attract Chinese students to stay.

10.2.4. Influence of national identity

As I mentioned in Chapter Nine, Chinese students’ national identity could be viewed as a centripetal force in their identity negotiation. In fact, ‘a nation is an “imagined community” because it exists as an entity in so far as its members mentally and emotionally “identify themselves” with a collective body’ (Bauman and May 2001, 140). Living in Australia, Chinese students still feel the influence of Chinese national identity imprinted on them. For example, Baixue, Jordan and Shao admitted that they had a strong sense of being Chinese. Their national identity drives them to go back to China, although they are experiencing an internal negotiation as to whether they should denounce their nationality, a form of representation of their national identity.

I am still a Chinese, and I do not hope to join in Australian nationality. ... Otherwise, I will have a sense of betrayal. (Baixue)

I still belong to China. ... Even if I can stay, I will not regard me as an Australian. ... I feel that it is hard for me to integrate into the society. (Jordan)

I am still a Chinese now. ... China makes me feel proud ... yes, a sense of pride being a Chinese. ... When I first came here, I went shopping in Kmart. ... I checked and found eighty percent are made in China, and I felt proud. ... When the sense of my national identity comes to me, I have stronger desire to go back. (Shao)

Chinese students’ sense of national identity is a result of the influence of Chinese culture and ideologies imbedded in Chinese education practice. Once national identity is achieved, it is difficult to eliminate it, and this is the reason why Chinese students want to keep Chinese nationality as a symbol of their national identity. Some students honestly admitted that they may stay in Australia after graduation; however, it is not easy for them to give up Chinese nationality. For them, it is a result of the continuous battle between Chinese authoritative discourses and second authoritative discourses,
which to a large extent could be based on the Western culture and new ideologies in their lived space.

To conclude, these centripetal forces influence Chinese students’ identity negotiation and their decision of returning to China or staying in Australia. Generally, these centripetal forces consist of Chinese students’ attachment to Chinese family, relatives and friends, which is brought about by Chinese Qinqing in their life. They also encompass their expectation of personal future career in China. The influence of Chinese culture, including Chinese ideology, and the influence of their national identity are all pushing these students to return to their space. All the centripetal forces are woven together and influence Chinese students’ identity negotiation, when they are living in-between different cultures and spaces.

10.3. Centrifugal Forces to Stay in Australia

As I mentioned before, it is supposed that in Chinese students’ identity negotiation there are centrifugal forces, as opposing and dialogic forces to centripetal forces, to attract them to stay in Australia. In my interviews, Chinese students also address these centrifugal forces involved in their identity negotiation. Now my discussion turns towards these centrifugal forces involved in their identity negotiation.

10.3.1. The reality of current China

Unexpectedly, in Chinese students’ identity negotiation the reality of today’s China is the first centrifugal force that drives them to stay in Australia. It is undeniable that China is rapidly developing now; however, despite living in Australia, these students complain that many emergent problems have yet to be solved in China. These Chinese participants feel that there is a need to re-examine China, since the reality of China is not what may have been imagined previously. These emergent changes make Chinese students feel hesitant, and some of them even decide to stay in Australia. For instance, Alex reported that his job-hunting experience in China made him appreciate that the work of teachers and students’ outlooks are different to what he once accepted. The new awareness led him to decide to stay in Australia.

I went back to China twice last year ... for looking for a position. ... Finally I chose to stay here. .... In China every year my teachers have some research papers as a task to write. Yet ... there is Shuifen (falsity) in it. ... People become overhasty. ... The teacher’s space is squeezed. When talking about a teacher as an occupation in the 1950s and 1960s, people still respected you. Yet, now being a teacher means that you are a poor person. ... Even if poverty is a problem to me, I still can stand it. ... However, the problem is when students ... only read love stories or magazines in classroom ... you cannot devote yourself to teaching. If a society does not respect knowledge, the ending will be sad in the future. (Alex)

Jordan and Ivy compared Australian life to the life in China. They felt that the living pressure in Australia was not as much as that in China. This day-to-day reality also influenced Chinese students’ identity negotiation and their decision.

I feel here it is not bad. .... From my part-time working experience, I find that here living stress is smaller. ... In China the stress is too large. (Jordan)

Why do some of my classmates want to stay here? They feel that Australia is good, but they will have too much stress if they go back to China. Compared to Australia, some aspects like employment in China are too difficult. (Ivy)
Facing the heated employment competition in China, Shao believed he may choose to stay in Australia so as to avoid such stress. According to him, the competition brings either positive or negative influences; yet, facing the negative influences, he accepted that he may choose to stay in Australia.

The employment in China is a very important factor. ... There are too many competitors for each position. I can compete, or even I may defeat them and get that position. ... The competition may be positive, but it also may be negative. ... I do not want to ask for trouble for myself. (Shao)

10.3.2. Negative influence of Chinese culture
Chinese culture’s negative influence is another centrifugal force that causes Chinese students to stay in Australia. Some participants disliked the negative influences of Chinese culture, and some looked to run away and find an ideal place to live. For them, Australia was a different and realistic place to live and was one of their choices as their second home. For instance, Shao talked about how in Chinese culture the negative influence of Guanxi often upsets him.

Interviewee: The interpersonal Guanxi is rather complex. ... 
Interviewer: It seems that Australia suits those people without Guanxi but would like to strive herself/himself? ... 
Interviewee: Yes, yes. ... 
Interviewer: If you don’t have Guanxi, your employment will be more difficult in China.
Interviewee: There is such a possibility. ... China is a large country, and Guanxi is so complex. ... I would rather not touch this. (Shao)

Essentially, Guanxi exists as a form of ‘social capital’ (Bourdieu 2002, 286) or simply ‘whom you know’ (Barker 2008, 430) in the Chinese social network. Guanxi is related to certain interests, and it also refers to ubiquitous personal connections, which are often founded ‘on family ties, ties of shared experience and ties of friendship and involve an obligation to help when asked’ (Irwin 1996, 112). In China, Guanxi also can refer to various relationships such as friends, family, supervisor/subordinate, teacher/student, coworkers, and many others. Practically, Chinese people ‘place a heavy weight on particularistic relationships and establish a clear boundary between ingroup and outgroup relationships’ (Chen and Starosta 1998, 7). Guanxi is reciprocal and Chinese regard it as rather complex.

After having achieved cultural capital in Australia, Chinese students wish to achieve their dream by virtue of their hard work, if possible, and other forms of capital. Here I should note that I borrow Bourdieu’s cultural capital and social capital to explain why Chinese students choose to stay in Australia. These students’ economic capital and symbolic capital are not strongly represented, but the conversions of different types of capital do exist. Given that they often lack Guanxi as a form of their social capital, if they go back to China, they prefer to stay in Australia so as to avoid Guanxi. Of course, it is wise to avoid certain competition with those people holding such social capital in China.

Jordan also explained why he does not want to return to China. He worried that, if he returns to China, he cannot lead his independent life and concentrate on his dream. He assumed that, once returning to that Chinese cultural context, many other-oriented opinions will come to him, and he may lose himself in the end. After having achieved
a sense of independence in Australia, these students, not like their peers in China, respect their parents, but they don’t simply follow their parents. It is a representation and an outcome of these Chinese students’ identity work, since they in essence have changed in certain way after studying and living in Australia for years.

Interviewee: In realising my dream, it will become more and more unrealistic. ... In China ... to live will be a priority. But ... here it will be easier to live and to realise my dream. ...
Interviewer: ... The setbacks are not caused in realising your dream but because of the life stress or the pressure from your life and/or your parents. You may do something else; ... yet, it is not what you need.
Interviewee: Yes, this is what I mean.
Interviewer: If you go back to China ... other powers attract and influence you, and you may run out of the trajectory. ... They think that it is fine, since you are on the exact way as they have designed before. ... Your life will not be for you but for what your parents, your family and the society have expected.
Interviewee: yes, I feel that it is like this. (Jordan)

Similarly, Rock worried that he does not have an independent space, if he goes back to China. According to Rock, Chinese parents often expect their children to fulfill their dream that they did not achieve in their own life; however, this makes some Chinese students feel it difficult to live an independent life.

Chinese people, more or less, are influenced by their parents. ... if the parents have regrets, they expect their children to fulfill their dream and eliminate their regrets. ... In this sense, our generation has undertaken too much that doesn’t belong to us. ... Chinese people respect their parents. ... Some people ... may have to give up their own ideas for making their parents happy or for fulfilling their parents’ expectation and do something that they would not like to do. (Rock)

These students’ opinions in essence are the basis of their fight against Chinese culture. In Chinese culture, ‘Confucians valued respect for parents and loyalty to superiors. It is believed that the subordinate has the duty to obey (xiao) (or demonstrate ‘filial piety’) and fulfill role obligations that signify his or her submission to duty’ (Ng 2002, 36). Yet, influenced by their sense of independence and the different cultures acquired in secondary Discourses, such students will probably choose not to go back to China.

It can be seen that Chinese students, after staying in Australia for some time, are able to perceive China and Chinese culture more objectively. They also look at themselves through the eyes of the Other and observe Chinese culture critically, including the negative aspects of Chinese traditional culture. It is an example that problematises a perception of Chinese students as acritical. Conversely, they are capable of examining Chinese traditional culture in a creative way so as to imagine their own future. These changes can be thought as the influence of their learning and living in secondary Discourses, and they are a result of the ongoing fighting between their authoritative discourses and their internal persuasive discourses.

10.3.3. Future expectation in Australia
Living in Australia for a couple of years, Chinese students to some extent have witnessed the everyday life of Australians. These participants admitted that they have an expectation of their future, if they can stay in Australia, which is also a centrifugal force that attracts some Chinese students to stay. For instance, Alex and Ivy witnessed that some Chinese-Australians live a happy life and therefore they expect that one day
they can live like them, although they may experience setbacks in Australia.

I have two uncles working as professors in University M, and they live happily here. ... I feel my future is full of hope. (Alex)

Sometimes when I communicate with Chinese immigrants and my classmates, they bring psychological influences to me. ... Chinese immigrants have ... enjoyed the life here, since the life is much better than in China. (Ivy)

Alex believed that Australia is an open multicultural place; hence, he is confident that he can find his space if staying in Australia.

In most cases when we do survey, including traveling, most Australians are very nice. ... Yes, it is an open and multicultural place. The society can embrace a lot. (Alex)

Mianzi (face) is another centrifugal force related to expectation in Chinese students’ identity negotiation. Mianzi originates from Chinese culture, and it often drives these students to stay in Australia. To Chinese students, their parents and family often place expectations upon their future, especially when they are studying in Australia. Chinese students, including their parents and family, may lose Mianzi, if they cannot stay in Australia but go back to China after graduation. To illustrate, many Chinese would probably believe that Baixue has proven to be not capable enough to stay in Australia and needs to go back to China. She feels that the influence of Mianzi pulls her to stay in Australia so as to avoid losing her family’s Mianzi and her own Mianzi.

I hope to bring glory to my parents. ... Even if I develop better in China than here, or even if I can make more money in China, my village fellows will still regard that I cannot stay in Australia ... no matter how beautifully I explain my decision to them. My parents will lose face. ... All people around me have such an opinion, expect for those urban students, whose parents just hope them to ... go back to take over their business, or find a position in a friend’s company, or find a good job. ... Many parents, at least, hope that their children can get permanent residency. (Baixue)

Many Chinese parents hope that their children can stay in Australia after they finish their course. They feel that they have Mianzi and even feel superior to others. If one day these students go back as a permanent resident of Australia, their parents will feel that their children ‘Yijin Huanxiang’ (return to hometown in glory). Traditionally it is highly-valued honor, and it even brings ‘Mianzi’ to the whole family. Influenced by Chinese culture, Chinese parents’ expectation becomes a centrifugal force in Chinese students’ identity negotiation, and pulls them to stay in Australia.

10.3.4. The reality of Australia
In addition to the expectation of their future, Chinese participants talked about their experiences in Australia. ‘The very way that we see things reveals secrets about us: what we see reveals what we are looking for, what we are interested in’ (Russon 2003, 10). The experiences mentioned by Chinese students may influence their identity negotiation. In Australia, the good salary, the magnificent environment, the simple interpersonal relationship, the equitable welfare system and the free educational space, and so on, are regarded as centripetal forces that cause some students to stay.

I like the environment. Here the environment is very good. ... It is a suitable place to live. (Baixue)

The natural scenery ... is very good, and I feel it is not easy to leave. (Jordan)
Another reason is the natural environment. Now China’s natural environment is becoming better and better, but compared to Australia, it is not as good as Australia’s. (Shao)

These participants also indicated that the Australian social, economic and educational environments are much better than those in China. In short, the reality of Australia makes some Chinese students feel hesitant to choose their future.

People make more money but spend less money here. ... Comparatively the expenditures are less. ... You can save some money. (Baixue)

In China, the natural and humanistic environment, including food, makes you worry. Yet here ... you don’t have to worry whether there is any poison in food. ... As for the economic and social environment ... generally their facility is fine. It may not be prosperous like Beijing and Shanghai, but ... there are not unsafe elements like in China. (Malu)

The relationship between people here has a bit less complexity but more frankness. ... The school system is better than China. ... Yes, more freedom. ... The welfare policy is another reason. How much do you spend bringing up a child? It is not so expensive in Australia. (Shao)

10.3.5. Other centrifugal forces
In my interviews, other centrifugal forces were proposed by Chinese participants. For example, Chinese students’ emotional experience in Australia, the expectation of their family and their personal friendship are counted as centrifugal forces that continue to impact on their identity negotiation.

I miss here. After all, I spent more than two years living and studying here. ... Really, I have some feeling on this place. (Jordan)

It is necessary for me to stay overseas so that my family can live here in future. I am their pioneer, and a few young cousins are still expecting me. (Malu)

As a student ... I have not worked full-time yet. I need to work here, since studying and working are completely different lives. ... Another factor is friendship. I have friends here and I have known them for two or three years. They are very nice. (Shao)

To sum up, various centrifugal forces were discussed in this section so as to explore why Chinese students want to stay in Australia. These centrifugal forces include their dissatisfaction with today’s China, their expectation of personal future in Australia, their desire to escape negative influences of Chinese culture such as Guanxi and their effort to seek independence. Mianzi and other relating factors were also addressed as centrifugal forces to describe the expectation of Chinese students and their parents. These centrifugal forces work collectively, and their influences upon Chinese students are presumed to be as powerful as those centripetal forces discussed previously in their identity negotiation.

10.4. Conclusion
Barker (2008, 217) argues that ‘identity is our creation. It is something always in process, a moving towards rather than an arrival.’ Chinese students’ identity is a dynamic project, and their identity negotiation is rather intense, but the process is slow. These centripetal forces in Chinese students’ identity negotiation are responsible for such a slow process of their identity work. For example, they cannot find a sense
of belonging in Australia; they often feel like outsiders in their lived spaces. Identity work needs more concern in the internationalisation of Australian higher education, since, without it, it would be difficult for international students, including Chinese students, to live a happy life, not to mention their integration into Australian culture.

It is evident that Chinese education practices, including Chinese culture and ideology, influence Chinese students deeply in Australia, which is extensively represented in their identity negotiation. To illustrate, the ubiquitous influences of Chinese culture, including Confucian cultural patterns, make Chinese students feel that they have a compulsory obligation to go back and fulfill their responsibilities such as looking after their parents as Xiao to them. Chinese national identity makes these students feel hesitant in their identity negotiation. Chinese national identity always drives Chinese students to go back to regain their self, since they would like to tie their personal future to their nation’s future.

Living in Australia, most Chinese students are crossing in-between different socio-cultural spaces in everyday life. Influenced by centrifugal and centripetal forces, they cannot help initiating identity negotiation. Although most students have not achieved a sense of belonging in their lived spaces, they are always being pulled by their perceived spaces. All the ‘lived, conceived and perceived realms should be interconnected, so that the “subject”, the individual member of a given social group, may move from one to another without confusion’ (Lefebvre 1991b, 40). Chinese students’ identity negotiation is an interconnection of their lived, conceived and perceived spaces, which assists them to reconsider the dialogic relationships between their self and the Other, their authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse, their primary Discourses and secondary Discourses, and their first home and second home.

Chinese students’ identity negotiation is not only a dialogue between these centrifugal forces and centripetal forces but also ‘a sort of bridging’ (Castro 1995, 7) to link their multiple identities. Their identity negotiation in essence is a commencement of their hybrid identity work. Yet, Chinese students’ identity negotiation, as a part of their identity work, never comes to an end, even after their university course is fulfilled, as ‘identity is always in process, is always being reconstituted in a process of becoming and by virtue of location in social, material, temporal and spatial contexts’ (Edensor 2002, 29). Chinese students’ identity work, including identity negotiation, is expected to stay with them all their life.

In Chapter Eleven, I respond to my research questions formulated in Chapter One and draw some findings in this project. Next, I re-examine the significance of doing this research into Chinese students’ everyday communication and identity work. I also discuss Chinese students’ achievements from the perspective of everyday life and point out that their identity work is a part of their achievements, since these students’ identity work is expected to influence their future life. I list the limitations of this thesis and point out the direction for my future research. Finally, given the complexity of internationalised education practice such as students’ heterogeneous cultures and identities involved, I reflect and suggest Bakhtin’s dialogism as pedagogy to be applied in the globalised education practice.
PART FOUR
CONCLUSION

Part Four (Chapter Eleven) consists of four sections.
In the first section, I respond to the research questions presented in Chapter One and summarise my main findings in this project. Firstly, the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students in Australia are always influenced by Confucian culture and other Chinese cultural patterns. Secondly, Chinese students experience the process of their becoming identity in everyday practices, and these changes trigger their identity work. Thirdly, the identity work of Chinese students is gradual, intense but unfinalisable; their identity is moving toward a hybrid identity.

In the second section, I re-examine the significance of this project. My exploration of the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students in essence is a particular perspective to observe the globalised Australian higher education practice from below and within. By doing this research project, I not only sought to capture the everyday communication and identity work of these Chinese students selected from University X but also contributed to the globalised Australian higher education practice. In Australia, Chinese students’ identity work is an intense and unfinalisable project, and it is also regarded as one of their achievements since it is expected to influence them all their lives.

In the third section, I honestly state the limitations in this institutional ethnography. As an ethnographer, I have tried to capture and present a full picture of Chinese students’ everyday communication and identity work during their stay in Australia. Yet, my description and analysis has not found feasible solutions to improving Australian higher education practice straight away. It is not possible for me to cover all those questions in the field of international higher education, even though those issues are related to Chinese students. My thought about the limitations of this research project provides me with possible trends and directions so that I can continue my study in this field in the future.

In the fourth section, on the basis of my reflection and observation of Chinese students in Australia, I propose Bakhtin’s dialogism as a model of the globalised education practice. It is suggested that the dialogic relationship should be applied in English teaching and learning practice in the globalised educational context. Essentially, it is to establish a dialogue between English culture, mainly the Western culture, and English learners’ cultures, especially those EFL learners’ cultures. A dialogic mode of teacher-student relationship is proposed for use in the globalised educational practice as well.
CHAPTER ELEVEN
CONCLUSION

11.1. Introduction
In Chapter Ten, I discussed Chinese students’ identity negotiation and the dialogic forces involved in it. I also noted that their identity negotiation exists ubiquitously in their everyday communication practices. Yet, for the sake of my discussion, I just located Chinese students’ identity negotiation in an imagined but practical discourse, that is, at the end of their course and at the point when Chinese students need to make the decision either to stay or to return home. I adopted Bakhtin’s terms ‘centrifugal’ and ‘centripetal’ to refer to the opposing and co-existing forces involved in their identity negotiation. It is under the influences of all the centrifugal and centripetal forces that Chinese students have illuminated their identity negotiation; their identity negotiation is also regarded as the commencement of their hybrid identity work in-between their different lived spaces.

In this chapter, I firstly respond to the research questions formulated in Chapter One and summarise the findings of this project. Secondly, I re-examine the significance of this research project. The analysis of Chinese students’ everyday life in University X has enabled the exploration of the globalised Australian higher education practice to take place from below and within – Chinese students’ everyday life has provided a window for this observation to be made. Living in Australia, Chinese students acquire their social and cultural capital in/through their everyday life. Simultaneously, their identity work as a part of their achievements is thought to be unfinalisable in their everyday practices, which means that its influences are unfinalisable as well. Thirdly, the limitations of this institutional ethnography are examined, which lays a foundation for my future research. Finally, I reflect on dialogism and propose it in the globalised education practice. My reflection originates from my interviews and my experience of English teaching and learning, including my own experience of learning and living in Australia. Dialogism as pedagogy is proposed to be applied in English teaching and learning practice in the globalised education context. It is also proposed as a mode to manage the teacher-student relationship in the globalised educational context.

11.2. Response to Research Questions
In Chapter One, I have listed some research questions as the central focus of this project. Now looking back through my discussions in Part Two and Part Three, it is not difficult to see that Chinese students’ communication practices, including their formal learning inside university and informal learning outside university, are all influenced by their identity work. Chinese students are concerned about their identity; they are concerned about how those Others, including insiders in their communication circle and outsiders beyond their communication circle, perceive them. Their identity work brings influences upon their communication practices as well.

In this research project, Confucian culture and other Chinese cultural patterns have been witnessed as being highly significant in bringing about ubiquitous influences in Chinese students’ everyday communication and identity work. These influences range from their comparisons between China and Australia to their impressions of their first English class and first professional class, from their communication with lecturers and others inside university to their communication practices outside university, from their institutional identity, cultural identity and national identity to their intense identity
negotiation. With regard to Chinese students’ identity negotiation, I placed it in an imagined but practical discourse so as to examine the centripetal and centrifugal forces involved in it, although their identity negotiation and its influences exist ubiquitously in Australia.

Here I would like to draw upon the main findings as a response to those research questions formulated in Chapter One. Firstly, Confucian culture and other Chinese cultural patterns bring heavy influences upon the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students during their stay in Australia. These influences are widely felt in the living of everyday events inside and outside their university, ranging from their first day of living in Australia (some influences even can be felt before they arrive in Australia such as their decision of study overseas) to their English language course and their professional course at the early stage of their stay in Australia, from their communication practices inside University X to their complex communication outside University X, from their ongoing identity work to their intense identity negotiation. It is seen that Chinese students are living in the shadow of Confucian culture and other Chinese cultural patterns. However, Chinese students are influenced by another set of cultural models in Australia as well, and this eventually brings about their identity negotiation, an ongoing struggle between the two different sets of cultural models imbedded in these Chinese students.

Secondly, Chinese students have experienced the process of their becoming identity in their everyday communication; their identity changes have triggered their identity work. Such a becoming process is often unnoticeable; however, in this research project Chinese students have felt these changes on themselves, including the changes they have observed on others such as other Chinese students and Chinese-Australians. All these changes are a result of living in their secondary Discourses and being influenced by the different cultural models. Also, all these changes are specific examples and representations of Chinese students identity work in Australia.

Thirdly, Chinese students’ becoming identity work is gradual but unfinalisable; their identity is moving toward a hybrid identity. Chinese students’ intense identity work not only exists in their internally persuasive discourses as a constant fighting but also exists in their everyday practices. In essence, their identity work is produced by certain ongoing battles and compromises of the two sets of cultural models. In the long run, this is the root of their hybrid identity. Influenced by the two sets of cultural models, Chinese students’ identity work will stay with them all their lives.

11.3. Globalised Education Practice from below
11.3.1. Contribution to globalised Australian higher education
This research project is not only an insight into understanding the everyday life and identity work of Chinese students in Australia but also into examining the globalised Australian higher education practice. In carrying out this project, I have discussed how the institutional orders mediate Chinese students’ everyday communication and identity work. Although I did not mention the institutional orders directly in this thesis, the institutional orders as a form of regulations play a role in ‘the circuit of culture’, to quote from Hall (1997, 1), since the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students are influenced by these regulations, especially those textual regulations in their institution.
In the circuit of culture, representation is interconnected to other elements such as regulation, consumption, production and identity, and all these elements interact with each other. In this research project, I am concerned about the details of Chinese students’ everyday life but not their business-style consumption in their university, although these students do pay for their tuition and receive services provided by their university. My concern of their everyday communication and identity work is far more than an analysis of these consumption activities. Chinese students’ consumption of Australian higher education, represented as international consumers of Australian higher education, is connected to their identity work; their everyday life inside and outside their university, as a way of (re)producing their identity and a detailed representation of their consumption, is mediated by the regulations of their institution, including the regulations outside their university. The everyday life of Chinese students is represented as a form of cultural practice in Australia. My investigation of Chinese students’ identity work is situated in Australian higher education practice, the provision of texts and the discourses that these Chinese students consume in Australia, especially in the discourse of internationalised higher education. My observation and analysis of the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students is a lens through which I can see how they, as international students, respond to Australian higher education.

Australian ‘universities are expected to run themselves as businesses and to manage the prevailing economic climate rather than rely on the state to protect them even though they provide a public service’ (Harris 2011, 22). Reciprocally, international students are imagined and regulated as international consumers ‘in a contractual relationship with the provider of educational services’ (Marginson et al. 2010, 66). Under this circumstance, Chinese parents invest in children’s education and expect them to achieve their cultural capital as well as other forms of capital in Australia. Chinese students not only bring about revenues to Australian universities; culturally and academically, they also bring about certain benefits to Australian higher education practice. Chinese students, including other international students enrolled in Australia, as ‘canaries in the coalmine’, ‘thankfully show us their difficulties in less dramatic ways but nevertheless point out aspects of our teaching that all students will probably experience as challenges’ (Ryan and Carroll 2005, 9). We hence should not simply regard Chinese students as international consumers in the globalised Australian higher education practice.

As I mentioned before, the analysis of the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students in essence is an examination of the globalised Australian higher education sector. To capture Chinese students’ everyday communication and identity work is a particular perspective that enables us to observe Australian higher education ‘globalisation from below’ (Singh, Kenway, and Apple 2005, 7). It is to listen to their voices so as to improve the quality and services of Australian higher education and contribute to its development. ‘If we improve conditions for international students, we improve them for all learners’ (Ryan and Carroll 2005, 10). In this sense, this institutional ethnographic research into Chinese students, which hopefully represents a large percentage of international students studying in Australia, is meaningful for other international students and local students as well.

11.3.2. Chinese students’ achievements in everyday life
In this research project, although most Chinese participants admit that they do not
achieve a sense of belonging in Australia, their everyday life is supposed to influence their future. During their stay in Australia, Chinese students’ everyday life, as a form of their cultural practice, helps them perceive and learn different cultures. Also, the Western cultural customs and life styles that they have witnessed and learned in their everyday life bring about influences on them, even if one day they go back to China. Living in multi-cultural Australia, Chinese students clearly see that the everyday life is like a social stage and everyone has different performances on it. Chinese students’ university and other universities in Australia may not be simply regarded as their everyday sites of dwelling and travelling but should be taken as ‘powerful sites of worldly knowledge production and agents in the formation of the “new” transnational workers, global/national citizen and worldly learner’ (Singh 2005, 34). As such, Chinese students are believed to have achieved much in their university life.

The everyday life of Chinese students triggers their identity work. In a liquid society, identity is always becoming, since ‘our global age is forcing us to dismantle our old identity and reassemble a new one, making us weary of our cultural identities’ (Chen 2006, 175). In Australia, Chinese students need to continuously make and re-make their identity, in which they achieve a deep perception of their self and the Other. This in the long run will bring benefits for them, since they will have a perception of their self, of Chinese, and of Chinese culture, from a standpoint of an Other and an outsider. Living in-between different cultures, Chinese students have learned how to live with different sets of cultural models in different Discourses. More importantly, their identity work will carry on, no matter whether they stay in Australia or return to China in the future.

It should be noted that in Australia the everyday life of Chinese students is far more than a simple combination of their formal learning inside university and their informal learning outside university. It is in essence a result of ‘the ideological function of the educational system’ (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, 194). Under this function, Chinese students have achieved a lot from different ideologies and cultures. All of these cannot be fulfilled in their home culture, ideology and educational system. Also, in their everyday practices, Chinese students aim to achieve their ‘position in economic and social hierarchy’, their ‘class habitus’, their ‘cultural and social capital’ and even their ‘eventual class membership’ (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, 255) for their future. As a form of their ‘symbolic capital’ (Bourdieu 1991, 72), these achievements and their influences on Chinese students, will exist all their lives.

11.3.3. Identity as an unfinalisable dialogue

Chinese students’ identity (work) is a part of their achievements in Australia. As I mentioned earlier, identity as a product is formed through communication practices. That is, ‘identity is an achievement of the person’s activity – but only within the contexts and events of social interaction’ (Holland and Lachicotte 2007, 118). Chinese students’ identity work in essence is a dialogue, and the dialogic mode also ‘affords the possibility for change and a developing point of view’ (Danow 1991, 79). Specifically, their identity work can be perceived as a dialogue between their previous identity and their becoming identity, between the culture mediated by their primary Discourses and the emergent culture of their secondary Discourses. In this dialogue, Chinese students’ identity changes gradually; meanwhile, they subconsciously start their new identity work so as to enter new lived spaces.
‘A dialogue is possible, according to Bakhtin, only when we remain different from our “others”’ (Marchenkova 2005, 177). In this dialogue, Chinese students realise that they are different from others. Hence such a dialogue helps Chinese students see their self through everyday communication with others. Indeed, it is the everyday life as their everyday communication that provides Chinese students with a locale for this dialogue between their primary identity and their new identity. The dialogue is either external (between two different individuals) or internal (between an earlier and later self), and it often occurs in-between their different spaces, which may eventually lead to their hybrid identity. This hybrid identity connects Chinese students’ new identities to their previous identities. Even if one day they return to China, their identity work, including their hybrid identity work, will continue, since ‘the hybridization process is always dynamic and incomplete’ (Chen 2006, 148). In this sense, Chinese students’ identity work is unfinalisable.

Chinese students’ identity (work) is a long project. Identity is always ‘in the process of formation’ (Hall 1991, 47), and it is ‘an ongoing process: the self is continually “reauthored” as its life and circumstances change, and is hence “unfinalisable”, always open to further development and transformation’ (Gardiner 2000, 49). As such, Chinese students’ identity is always in process, and it is always ‘being reconstituted in a process of becoming and by virtue of location in social, material, temporal and spatial contexts’ (Edensor 2002, 29). Given that identity is ‘always deferred and in the process of becoming – never really, never yet, never absolutely “there”’ (MacLure 2003, 131), to achieve an identity ‘takes (and makes) personal experience to organise a self around discourses and practices, with the aid of cultural resources and the behavioral prompting and verbal feedback of others’ (Holland et al. 1998, 285).

11.4. Limitations of This Thesis

Before I move to my reflection of writing this research project, I would like to address some potential weak points in this study. Firstly, as an outsider in Australia, I often felt some puzzles about the globalised Australian higher education in the process of my research and writing. My research and writing were influenced by my knowledge of Chinese students and their everyday lives in Australia, including my own everyday life, mostly relating to China and Chinese culture. Although my dual identities did provide me with a particular insight into this project, as an outsider, the challenges in my international everyday life and research process always influenced my observation standpoint and my thesis writing.

The second potential weak point is that I only chose seven Chinese participants from University X in this institutional ethnography. These participants are supposed to represent the large population of Chinese students in Australia, but they may not be able to effectively represent all those different voices in Australian higher education institutions. My data collection and interpretation of the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students were just based on these selected participants but not on other parties involved in Australian higher education sector. In reality, no other parties were interviewed in this project. Consequently, I might have missed some strong voices such as the voices from those university lecturers, Australian students, other international students and other parties involved in Chinese students’ everyday communication practices and Australian higher education practice.

Last but not least, by focusing on the everyday communication and identity work of
Chinese students, this institutional ethnography is designed to examine the globalised Australian higher education practice from below and within. In doing this project, I noticed that there are some respects that deserve my examination. For instance, I did not address such important issues as curriculum and pedagogic issues for international students yet, although in this last chapter I proposed that Bakhtin’s dialogism should be applied in the globalised English teaching and learning and the teacher-student relationship in the globalised educational context. Also, I did not suggest solutions to solving those tricky problems such as how to improve services for international students in the globalised higher education practice. However, optimistically, these potential weak points not only signal the limits of the scope and scale of this study; they also leave much space for my future research.

11.5. Dialogism as Pedagogy in Globalised Education

Today given that the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students are situated in a globalised education context, how we confront international students’, including Chinese students’, identity multiplicity hence becomes a realistic challenge. In the section, I reflect on pedagogy and propose a dialogic model in the globalised English teaching and learning and a dialogic mode of teacher-student relationship in the globalised education practice. My reflection on this dialogic pedagogy originates from my interviews with these Chinese participants and my own English teaching and learning experience; my reflection on the dialogic mode of teacher-student relationships comes from my participants’ comparisons of different teacher-student relationships in Australia and China.

11.5.1. Dialogism in English teaching and learning

Chinese students are expected to use English to communicate with others in Australia. Yet, in my interviews, these participants often mention that English poses great challenges for them. In practice, English teaching and learning is troublesome for many teachers and learners in a globalised education practice. I reflect and propose a dialogic model that can be used in a globalised English teaching and learning context, which includes the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

English teaching and learning in the globalised educational context should be viewed as a dialogue between English language and its learners’ native language, between English culture (mainly the Western culture) and its learners’ cultures. Such a dialogic awareness is meaningful for those English learners. Brought up in their native cultural context, English learners are deeply influenced by their native culture, ideology and learning models. Usually their English learning model is influenced by the model of their native language learning as well. For instance, in China the rote learning model influences Chinese English learners, and many learners simply regard English as a communication tool and assume that English learning is no more than memorising words and grammar rules since their English examinations largely focus on grammar rules. In the end, they may memorise some English words and grammar rules but they still feel that it is difficult to survive when located in an authentic English context.

The traditional model of English teaching and learning is influenced by traditional linguistics, which assumes the word as a static lexical element with a certain object and a referent. Nevertheless, ‘the word is conceived as an utterance invested with a distinct significance and meaning, whose definitive features are its communicative aspect and intent’ (Danow 1991, 22). The meaning of the word should be conceived
as a dialogue between its users. That is, ‘dialogue creates the possibility of language; language emerges from dialogue and is its consequence. Language, in turn, is the essential medium of dialogue and self-formation’ (Marchenkova 2005, 175). This dialogue is not only influenced by its original meaning as conceived by the traditional linguistics but also by the context of communication and its interpretation by its speakers. In other words, the meaning does not simply exist in a dictionary; it is also a product of a continuing dialogue between its users.

As discussed in Chapter Three, language is a part of culture and culture is represented in language as well. Culture and language are interwoven and mutually influenced. The teaching and learning of a culture is often completed subconsciously in language teaching and learning practice. In English language teaching practice, teachers are supposed to teach culture as well. Yet, English teachers such as many English teachers in China often use the traditional teaching model to organise their English teaching. The spread of English culture is often resisted as well. Certain resistance even comes from English teaching practitioners and policy-makers, since they worry that the spread of English culture may bring erosion to their native culture and its dominant position. Some English teachers may have already realised the importance of culture, but indeed there is often a limited space to engage their students in English culture.

In a monologic educational context, English learners often simply accept English as a tool rather than a culture carrier. For instance, in Chinese English teaching and learning practices, given that English language learners have to face various English examinations as a way to represent their achievement, the first priority of English teachers is to help students achieve a high score. In this case, English teaching is not responsive to a dialogue between different cultures. In the long run, these English learners often feel vulnerable when one day they enter an authentic English-speaking context, since what they learned in their textbooks is far removed from what they experience in the real world of English-speaking cultures.

English language teaching and learning pedagogy should be regarded as a dialogue between English culture and its learners’ native cultures in a globalised context. In fact, teaching of culture should ‘become the core of language teaching’ (Kramsch 2000, 8), in which intercultural dialogue is a platform for learners to experience English culture. This dialogic model posits English culture and English learners’ native cultures at the same level with the same importance. Such a dialogue also provides an opportunity for English learners to cross a cultural boundary and enter another different cultural space. However, in reality there is always asymmetry rather than quality of cultures. It is unnecessary to be agitated about the loss of dominant native culture, if there is a dominant native culture, since ‘such a dialogic encounter of two cultures does not result in merging or mixing. Each retains its own unity and open totality, but they are mutually enriched’ (Bakhtin 1986c, 7). In this dialogic model, the meaning of English can be understood by its learners; it also helps English learners understand the cultural world behind English words.

In such a dialogic model, culture is expected to be represented in English teaching and learning practice. ‘Cultural meanings are not only “in the head”. They organise and regulate social practices, influence our conduct and consequently have real, practical effects’ (Hall 1997, 3). The dialogic model not only assists learners to learn English culture in their language learning but also mediates their everyday practices. English
learners as outsiders perceive English culture in a particular way, since ‘outsideness is a most powerful factor in understanding. It is only in the eyes of another culture that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly (but not maximally fully, because there will be cultures that see and understand even more)’ (Bakhtin 1986c, 7). Learning English culture as an Other can assist English learners to understand their own native culture as well, since the dialogic relationship offers them ‘the surplus of seeing’ (Holquist 2002, 35) in examining their own native culture.

There often exists a cultural border in English teaching and learning practice. Yet, optimistically, such a dialogic model enables English teachers and learners, for instance, English teachers and learners in China, to achieve a better understanding of their selves and their native culture. They are also able to see the otherness – English culture – in English teaching and learning. In this sense, it is time to apply this dialogic model as pedagogy in the globalised English educational context.

11.5.2. Dialogism in teacher-student relationship

Although Confucianism is often criticised, and some people even question whether it can influence the Chinese young generation of today, Chinese education is to some extent still influenced by Confucianism. In China, teachers and education ‘have had a long and honored tradition since the era of Confucius’ (Guo and Pungur 2008, 248). For example, the Confucian concept Li, ‘translated as “ritual”, “rites”, “customs”, “etiquette”, “propriety”, “morals”, “rules of proper behavior”, and “worship”’, (Ames and Rosemont 1999, 51) assumes that Chinese students should respect and follow their teachers. Another Confucian concept He (harmony) also implies that Chinese students need to follow their teachers so as to achieve harmony. In such a mode of teacher-student relationship, both parties are not placed at the same level.

The mode of teacher-student relationship in the Chinese education practice (including in other countries where the dominant educational culture is influenced by Confucianism and other Chinese cultural patterns) should be criticised, since there is no teacher-student interdependence in this mode. In other words, this mode simplifies the relationship between teachers and students, and it does not leave any space for both parties, especially for students. Without a dialogic mode, without the existence of students as teachers’ mirror, it is not possible for teachers to fulfill their commitments.

Moving into a globalised educational context, the mode of teacher-student relationship should be dialogic. Such a mode is borrowed from Bakhtin. ‘For Bakhtin, dialogue is not just a mode of interaction but rather a way of communal existence in which people establish a multifaceted relationship of mutual interdependence’ (Kostogriz 2005a, 193). That is, this dialogic mode of teacher-student relationship does not simply focus on who is superior and who is inferior in their communication practices; instead, the co-existence of teachers and students is often interactive in the globalised educational context. Teachers need to convey their meaning to students in a dialogic mode; otherwise, without the existence of students, the existence of teachers is meaningless.

The dialogic mode of teacher-student relationship originates from ‘the simultaneous unity of differences’ (Holquist 2002, 36) as well. When different cultures (say from teachers and students) merge together, it is impossible to simply identify a positive and/or negative value of culture or to accept and/or refuse a certain culture. The
challenge is how to handle the teacher-student dialogue, since the mode of teacher-student relationship is usually different when located in different cultural contexts. Of course I admit that to establish this dialogic mode of teacher-student relationship is a long process for both teachers and students. Yet, without such a dialogic relationship mode, teachers may not be able to handle the complexity in it, and students also may not be able to achieve an independent position in the globalised education practice.

Here I also would like to draw on Bakhtin’s term ‘polyphony’ to explain the dialogic mode of teacher-student relationship. Polyphony refers to the ‘many-voicedness’ of texts in which characters and narrator speak on equal terms, i.e., ‘the autonomy of the characters’ voices’ (Vice 1997, 112). According to Kostogriz (2005b, 110), polyphony is ‘not just a mode of interaction but, rather, a way of social life in which people establish multifaceted relationships between self and the Other, between a person and culture and between cultures.’ I borrow the concept of polyphony to refer to the multiplicity of voices of teachers and students in the globalised educational practice. It is known that there is only one voice from teachers in traditional educational practice, and this dominant voice often symbolises power, rightness and authority. In such a monologic educational context, the voices of ‘Other’, i.e. students, are usually ignored. Yet, it is not possible to achieve polyphony without the recognition of alterity brought by teacher-student dialogic interaction. To put it in a simple way, ‘without polyphony, dialogism is impossible’ (Vice 1997, 113).

This dialogic mode is supposed to be set up not only between teacher and student but also among students themselves in order to achieve polyphony. That is, polyphony can ‘enable students to understand and negotiate differences’ (Kostogriz 2009, 148), and it can also encourage students to participate in and foster more interactions among themselves, including those with their teachers. To achieve polyphony, it is teachers who should take the initiative to set up a dialogic atmosphere for multi-voicedness in their communication with students. Teachers should realise that ‘teaching and learning are dynamic parts of a whole and that they could learn as much from their students as students could from them’ (Ryan 2005a, 93). Only by this can teachers and students immerse themselves in a dialogic educational context.

In the globalised educational practice, the traditional mode of teacher-student relationship, which often implies a monologue in teacher-student communication, makes it difficult for teachers and students to see each other, including their self, and (re)shape their identity. Without polyphony, both parties in their communication are just separate entities. However, both teachers and students in this dialogic mode are dynamic entities, each serving to differentiate the self from the other, ‘occupying simultaneous but different space’ (Holquist 2002, 21). Of course, if students only take on a role of being a ‘parrot’ in communication with teachers, including with other students, in the long run they will be always placed in a passive and peripheral position; this dialogic mode of teacher-student relationship can never occur.

11.6. Conclusion
This chapter consists of the conclusion of this institutional ethnography and my reflection in the process of my research and writing. I first responded to the research questions and drew the main findings for this ethnographic study. These findings reveal that Chinese students are greatly influenced by Confucian culture and other Chinese cultural patterns in their communication practices and identity work. Their
identity work is moving towards a hybrid identity; complex centrifugal and centripetal forces are involved in their identity negotiation. Chinese students’ identity work is thought to be an unfinalisable project, and its influences upon Chinese students will exist infinitely.

I restated the significance of this research project. The everyday life of Chinese students is a lens through which I can view the globalised Australian higher education practice from below. Chinese students’ everyday life is a repetitious but changing process for them to achieve their social and cultural capital in Australia. Hence, to conduct this research project from the perspective of everyday life reveals the details of Chinese students’ communication practices and identity work in Australia, and it also supports that ‘the study of everyday life shows clearly that people with secrets, with inner lives, with mysteries, lead mundane everyday lives’ (Lefebvre 1991a, 239). This institutional ethnographic project is helpful for us to re-examine Australian higher education sector. More importantly, Chinese students’ identity work is unfinalisable. Living in “fluid” phase of modernity (Bauman 2004, 51), the identity work of Chinese students as a dialogue never comes to an end. Even if one day they return to China, they may still encounter an experience of ‘being Othered’ (Koh 2012, 177). In this sense, Chinese students’ identity work as a dialogue is ‘open-ended and “unfinalisable”’ (Gardiner 2000, 58) in their life.

In this conclusion chapter, I also addressed the limitations of this research thesis. Although I attempted to capture all the relevant issues relating to Chinese students, it is impossible and impractical to cover all those questions in the field of international education sector, even in the field of Chinese students in Australia. Optimistically, these limitations are viewed as the gap where I should start in my future research.

Finally, my reflection on dialogism as pedagogy was proposed in the globalised education practice. It was suggested that a dialogic model be set up in the globalised English teaching and learning practice, since ‘it is only through meaningful interactive activities in communicative contexts that a learner broadens and deepens the capability for language use’ (Kumaravadivelu 2006, 8). It was also suggested that a dialogic mode of teacher-student relationship be established in the globalised education practice. From the perspective of teachers, ‘to engage in a pedagogical dialogue is to listen and to be open to the Other; it is to be immersed in the discursive space where both teachers and students become responsive and answerable when face-to-face with alterity’ (Kostogriz 2009, 147). The dialogic mode would thereby help teachers examine their identity, since they can reflect on their selves in dialogic communication with students. In this dialogic mode, ‘with the role of the teacher decentered, students become responsible and active/reflective learners’ (Hammond and Gao 2002, 235). Otherwise, if there is not such a teacher-student dialogic mode in practice, creation in communication will be more difficult or impossible.

Seeing that ‘globalisation is the interconnection of cultural, social, political and economic processes across the world’ (Washbourne 2005, 161), complex forces are involved in today’s globalised higher education practice. In doing this project, my insight into the everyday communication and identity work of Chinese students makes it possible for the parties involved to reflect on the globalised Australian higher education practices and pay more attention to the everyday life of Chinese students. Given that the aim of a critique of everyday life is ‘a question of discovering what
must and can change and be transformed in people’s lives’ (Lefebvre 2008, 26),
hopefully my research and writing of Chinese students’ everyday communication and
identity work not only can help those parties involved understand them but also make
a contribution to the development of theory and practice in the globalised higher
education in Australia and China.
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