Verification of intellectual equality: A case study of Chinese modes of critical thinking

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STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICATION

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

(Signature)

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ABSTRACT

The key issue investigated through this research concerns the construction of international People’s Republic of China (PRC) students as uncritical and unable to engage in thinking and critical theoretical analysis. However, the research focus is not to transmit the technique of critical thinking to allegedly deficit Chinese critical thinkers, specifically postgraduate students in this study, but to make use of the Chinese modes of critical thinking that are already available to them in their learning and research in Australian universities.

The research reported in this thesis is a case study. Through analysing a popular textual artefact, and collecting interview data, this research project specifically addressed the research question of: how might the presupposition of intellectual equality with regard to postgraduate students from China studying in Anglophone universities be verified through Chinese modes of critical thinking? To do so, the study explores particular modes of critical thinking presented in Chinese popular culture, as well as through Chinese postgraduate students’ perspectives and experiences. Consideration is given to the mechanisms that might constrain and extend students' capabilities for engaging Chinese modes of critical thinking in an Anglophone educational context.

The aim of this research is to explore Chinese modes of critical thinking, as ways to test and verify pedagogical alternatives that are more likely to manifest and expand Chinese international students’ critical capabilities, in order to further push the boundaries that are determined by uniformization of Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking associated with English monolingual paradigm. The innovation of this thesis lies in progressing the debates around a shift away from a deficit view of ‘uncritical Chinese students’ from a monolingual shaped mindset, towards more holistic, postmonolingual pedagogies that are underpinned by an understanding of the intellectual equality of all students. The thesis per se is an example of theorising Chinese modes of critical thinking in English-only Anglophone higher education and academic research.
Publications:


CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Various media reports stated a view that international students from China are deficient in critical thinking in their university studies. The following headlines in the Chinese language as well as English language press over the last five years convey an image of international students from China as uncritical thinkers.

‘Chinese students’ lack of critical thinking due to propaganda’ (Matthews, 2016, Source: The Times High Education)

‘Critical thinking, an ability Chinese students need’ (Zhu, 2015, sources: China Daily)

‘Here’s the truth about Shanghai schools, they’re terrible’ (Ringmar, 2013, source: The Guardian)

‘Why Chinese students lack capabilities for critical thinking?’ (Hu, 2013, source: nfmedia 南方都市报)

‘International Chinese students fail courses due to their lack of education in critical thinking’ (Chen, 2015, source: 光明教育)

‘What is the difference between Chinese students and American students in critical thinking? American professors find the answer’ (Wu, 2016, source: Epoch Times).

‘We don’t want our students to be like Chinese students: why the U.S. retains the critical edge in the global education debate’ (Tarnoff, 2011, source: The Huffington Post)
Media reports attribute Chinese students’ lack of critical thinking to Communist Party propaganda (Matthews, 2016), and/or to the Chinese education system and its pedagogical methods (Zhu, 2015; Ringmar, 2013; Hu, 2013; Chen, 2015; Wu, 2016). There appears to be a consensus across academic circles that Chinese students are not skilled in critical thinking, and this is expressed by some Chinese students themselves:

As a former undergraduate and post-graduate student, according to my supervisors in China and abroad, I have been an intelligent, self-motivated and diligent student, with broad and profound theoretical knowledge in my major subjects, but when it comes to criticality, I do not compete so well. This is an accurate and typical judgement not only by me, but one that in fact fits most Chinese overseas students (Zhu, 2015, ‘Critical thinking, an ability Chinese students need,’ italics added).

Of course, there are media posts countering these kinds of observations.

‘Study finds Chinese students excel in critical thinking.’ (Hernández, 2016, source: nytimes)

‘Chinese innovation: More than a fast follower?’ (Part 2). (Lee, 2016, source: Interpreter)

‘China’s role in global innovation.’ (Lee, 2015, source: Merics)

These media reports claim that Chinese students can be critical and innovative in promoting technology transfer and research to other countries.

These different views on critical thinking by Chinese students raise the question of whether this applies to all Chinese students, or to most or some of them; and the question of the extent of criticality or uncriticality. The very definition of ‘critical thinking’ needs close attention, and consideration of the whole issue demands an enquiry into the nature of critical thinking in Western universities. At the same time there is a need to elucidate the many educational, cultural and linguistic factors that will form an image of critical thinking as it projects itself onto Chinese international students in a Western learning environment. To the matter enquires into the modes of critical thinking that Chinese international students bring with them when they study
in the West, what aspects of critical thinking might they already possess? What level of critical thinking are they capable of, and how might their critical attitudes impact on Western players? Again, given a level of uncriticality caused by factors of whatever kind, how can the critical potential of international students from China in a Western intellectual environment mobilise itself to verify the culture of the world’s oldest continuous civilisation?

Against the dominating force of the Western Other, a Chinese point of view can pursue the continuing logic of a cultural tradition that asks to be respected for its own way of analysing knowledge, furthering science and enacting realities. A Chinese view that may be characterised as non-Postmodern has its own operative formula of critical thinking that wishes to be recognised as distinct from the current West: it may indeed be true that while Greek-based reasoning seeks the Truth, Chinese reasoning seeks the 道 Tao, the Way (Huang, 2011).

Having in mind these possible questions, this thesis explores Chinese modes of critical thinking as a basis for consideration of what these could provide postgraduate students with particular means to extend and deepen their critical thinking.

Critical thinking is often said to be a key educational skill (Dwyer et al., 2015; Alguezai & Filieri, 2014; Matthews, 2016). Yet there is no single consensus on the definition of critical thinking, but abundant interpretations of this contested term (Moore, 2013; Holliday, 2010; Fisher, 2011; Chui, 2009). Fred and Clark (in press) have brought together contributions by researchers from around the world to provide perspectives on critical thinking and alternative explanations of the concept in multilingual and intercultural education, where there is no consensus on a single definition of its dispositions and skills. The nature of critical thinking itself no doubt will mean that no undisputed characterisation of this complex concept will emerge in the Western world, or specifically in the Anglophone academic community that is the focus of the present project.
1.1 The research problem

The key problem warranting the investigation reported in this thesis is the construction of international students from China as uncritical. Chinese students are considered to have limited ability to engage in critical analysis and critical assessment of theoretical issues. Chinese students are construed as passive, uncritical learners (Egege, & Kutieleh, 2004; Asmar, 2005; Clark & Gieve, 2006). The perception of these Chinese students as uncritical is argued to be due to the following factors in particular:

A. the education system in China focuses excessively on rote memorisation (Huang, 2008; Liu, 2007; Huang, 2013);
B. traditional Chinese cultural educational habits of thinking and social life are thought to stress harmony at the expense of critique (Wang, 2006; Tian & Low, 2011);
C. anxiety and a feeling of exclusion from the local student environment, together with an unfamiliar teacher-student relationship tends to mean that students are unwilling to express critical ideas (Yan & Berliner, 2011a; 2011b; Spiro, 2014);
D. inadequate ability in English comprehension and expression affects their ability to reason critically in English (Liu & Jackson, 2008; Evan & Morrison, 2011; Alison & Lee, 2014);
E. lack of familiarity with Western educational values and attitudes to criticality (Durkin, 2008; Liu & Hu, 2005; Kirkpatrick and Zang, 2011; Deng, & Pei, 2009).

Here is it important to note that much of this research has been undertaken by Chinese scholars.

However, against this research, the following moderating arguments have been advanced in an endeavour to offer alternative and understanding of international students from China:
1. The construction of Chinese students as uncritical is [entirely or at least in part] a product of compromised measurements used to assess their performance; and international education in Anglophone countries is conducted in an English monolingual environment where not only is communication conducted in English but many aspects of knowledge are implicitly assumed to be true and valid. (Liu, 2007; Sherry, Thomas & Chui, 2010; Ryan & Viete, 2009; Issa, 2009; Spiro, 2014; O’Sullivan & Guo, 2010).

2. Chinese scholars and ordinary people do have their own modes of critique but these tend to be ignored in Western educational thinking and pedagogy (Davies, 2007; Singh, 2009; Tong & Zhou, 2002; Zhang, 2011).

3. There are ways and issues where many Western scholars take particular lines in critical thinking while ignoring other intellectual paths that are not convenient in their construction of theory¹ (Davies, 2007; Huang, 2011)

4. Chinese international students can and do engage in critical thinking, and in their studies of education are introducing Chinese concepts as critical theoretical tools (Singh & Meng, 2011; Qi, 2015; Meng, 2012).

In sum, Chinese students are said to have a ‘deficit’ (Clark & Gieve, 2006, p. 56) with regard to their capabilities for critical thinking. However, there is research which considers other aspects of this problem.

In order to address these two different perceptions of international students from China who studied in Anglophone universities, this study differentiates ‘Chinese students’ from ‘students from China.’ It uses ‘Chinese students’ to refer to the label that is used by some research literature and media reports to construe these international students from China as ‘uncritical’. The label ‘Chinese students’ relates this groups of students’ capabilities for critical thinking with the nation-state of China, and communicates a level of intellectual inequality (Rancière, 1991). While ‘(postgraduate) students from China’, and ‘Chinese international (postgraduate) students from China’

¹ This includes reflective postmodernist and post-structuralist thinking, and constructivist thinking that sees science as purely a product of the human mind. It is understandable that students educated in a Chinese system that stresses mathematical and scientific teaching should find this difficult to accept.
students’ are used in this thesis to describe the group of students that is not limited to their identity with the nation-state of China, and supposedly equally intelligent in critical thinking. The word ‘postgraduate’ is added to the terms because this group of students has been a particular target of this research. While summarised here to provide an overview of the research problem, the literature cited above is elaborated in Chapter Two.

1.2 Research context

Recent research has begun to open paths using Asia as creative theoretical resources in largely Anglophone higher education contexts. There is an agenda for an Asia literacy in Australia (Salter, 2014, 2015; Weinmann, 2015; Singh, 1995), concerned with ‘possessing knowledge, skills and understandings of the histories, geographies, arts, cultures and languages of the diverse Asian region’ (AEF, cited in Salter, 2014, p. 204). This is part of an intercultural educational drive to reposition Australian-Asian relations. ‘Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia is one of three cross-curricular priorities in the National Curriculum’ (Salter, 2014, p. 204). It identifies the need for ‘prevailing curriculum claims to represent Asia so as to enable Australia to improve its relations with Asia itself, and Australian images of Asia’ (Singh, 1995, p. 599). Through these thought-provoking papers, this globally-minded research invites those working in international education to take a second look at the potential benefits of multiplying the intellectual resources, including the question of critical thinking (Singh & Han, 2017), through activating, mobilising and deploying researchers’ multilingual and intercultural resources in knowledge production and dissemination.

However, despite the recognised importance of Asian engagement in Australian education, there has been relatively little comprehensive research conducted on increasing cultural diversity in higher education (Winchester-Seeto, et al., 2014). Attempting to inject knowledge of Asia implicitly seems to have met a ‘seemingly insurmountable barrier’ (Salter, 2014, p. 204). In this context, there have been studies devoted to research on international students’ mindset of being ‘global citizens’ after
they are exposed to intercultural learning environments (Salter, 2014). The emerging literature does seek to explicitly address non-Western linguistic and/or theoretic knowledge in higher education (Grant & McKinley, 2011; Weinmann, 2015; Singh & Meng, 2011, Singh & Qi, 2013), yet ‘authentic’ experiences of knowing Asia and engaging Asian culture are still required in theoretical work (Salter, 2014).

1.3 Research focus

Inspired by the possibilities and gaps in such research, the research focus of this project is the verification of intellectual equality, through investigating Chinese modes of critical thinking. The research problem frames a problematic understanding of Chinese students, inasmuch as they are said to have a ‘deficit’ in their capabilities for critical thinking. This ignores the possibility that their capabilities may not have been appropriately assessed, realised, mobilized or engaged through more sensitive pedagogies. The construct of uncritical Chinese students speaks of an intellectual inequality (Rancière, 1991), where these students are thought to come from a deficient education background and are lacking in English language proficiency. This study assumes that these students can be equally intelligent regarding their capabilities for critical thinking when they can engage their knowledge in Chinese language, and focuses on verifying the validity of such a presupposition. In this research, the verification of intellectual equality means to move from the construct of uncritical Chinese students, and work towards an equal ground as proposed by Rancière, ‘everyone is of equal intelligence’ (1991, p.110). Accordingly, this study looks closely into Chinese modes of critical thinking that (a) international students may demonstrate in their own Chinese language, and more importantly, (b) can be used as conceptual analytical tools to be applied in a process of critical theorisation. Rancière’s (1991) concept with regard to intellectual inequality and equality is further explained in Chapter Three. A clear explanation of the meaning of the phrase ‘Chinese modes of critical thinking’ in this study is explained below in section 1.7.3.

It is important to note that the verification of intellectual equality here is a process of pursuing the presupposition that ‘everyone is of equal intelligence’ (Rancière, 1991).
It does not mean to prove that all international students from China can think critically. The aim is to verify the presumposition in and through the Chinese language people are engaging in critical thinking, as opposed to a ‘deficit’ view. Thus this thesis describes different forms and methods where students from China actually do engage in critical thinking (Chapters 5, 6 and 7). Evidence is also submitted to demonstrate the possibility that with sensible pedagogical approach, international students from China may be mobilised to engage Chinese modes of critical thinking in their learning and research in Anglophone universities.

This thesis challenges the notion that Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking and Chinese modes of critical thinking are two separate entities that cannot be united in a process of dialogue. The thesis identifies possible new ways to engage international students from China in critical thinking. Investigation into Chinese modes of critical thinking this may lead to an ‘innovative re-thinking of engagement’ enabling ‘dynamic capability of teachers and students to position themselves relationally’ within a hybrid educational context (Weinmann, 2015, p. 185). It is not suggested here that this ought to be confined to a Western-Chinese engagement critical thinking alone: it can be part of a multilingual intercultural development in internationalising education. This study however within a very broad area of ‘Asia literacy’ focuses down on ‘Chinese literacy’ and confines itself to international students from China, with special emphasis on postgraduates.

1.4 Delimitations of this study

This thesis accepts the importance of critical thinking in higher education, especially for students in and from China and in particular postgraduate students. However, the art and practice of critical thinking are complex and not amenable to precise, restrictive definition. Critical thinking is expected in Anglophone universities. Chinese international students coming to study at Anglophone universities need to learn to use academic English and to engage with critical thinking in the various subjects they study. To students from an intellectual tradition employing different methods of critical analysis, this means confrontation with unfamiliar language and unfamiliar cultural concepts and pedagogies.
Here it is important to state firstly what this thesis is not about. The pedagogical approaches of Western educators are at an interface between international students from China on the one hand and Western analytical approaches and theory on the other. This study anticipates that these students will be in positions where they will understand global intellectual concerns and proceed to form mature judgements that will validate the value of their education in China and abroad. Therefore, this study disclaims any interest in how to ‘explain’ and ‘teach’ techniques of critical thinking—so recognised and privileged in Western universities—to ‘uninformed’ Chinese students.

At the same time, this study is aware of the wider range of research angles into modes of critical thinking and students’ capabilities for such skills. For example, Elder & Paul (2008; 2009) are concerned that most of the problems in human life are caused by problems in human thinking, and thus devote considerable research in critical thinking through initiating guidelines for adolescents to practise critical thinking. Facione (2007, 2011) produces valuable work in continuously researching ways of testing and teaching critical thinking. In a clear, common-sense and entertaining way, he offers practical suggestions on how to reinforce and improve critical thinking skills and critical habits of mind. Abrami and colleagues (2001, 2003) investigate applications of technology for active and meaningful learning and impacts of instruction on students’ critical thinking skills and disposition. I am mindful of the intellectual work that has been done in the research area of critical thinking, and I respect that work. But I have selected a different approach to make an original contribution to this field. The present study is neither a test of Chinese international students’ capabilities for critical thinking nor an action project to develop such capacities. This study will explore Chinese modes of critical thinking through examining a popular Chinese textual artefact and investigating the perspectives and experiences of postgraduate students both in China and in Australia.

The present study cannot cover the whole scope of modern critical thought, nor can it analyse various kinds of logical reasoning. The study focuses on the need for postgraduate students from China to achieve a level of critical thinking that will enable them to confidently master intellectual challenges in their chosen field, through uncovering the Chinese modes of critical thinking available to them. To do
this, they can engage with new information and new theories in ways that merge their existing education and training. This implies an educational goal concerning an integration of cultural differences as well as an ability to cross over the language barrier that hinders their ability in academic English.

The thesis is about exploring Chinese modes of critical thinking. Mindful of the debate over Chinese students’ capabilities in critical thinking in Western universities through literature, this study sets on a presupposition of intellectual equality (Rancière, 1991), which assumes ‘everyone is of equal [critical] intelligence’ (p. 110). If educators take a Western-centred approach—and even more to the point, an Anglophone-centred approach—in teaching and assessing critical thinking, and assume that their embodied understanding of critical scholarship is adequately conveyed in English, and yet do not ensure that their students have applied their existing knowledge and skills in applying critical approaches to new knowledge—if this is the situation, then this thesis asks: Is it not true that there will have been a failure in international education? Such a failure would signify that a potential productive force uniting divergent linguistic and theoretical resources will not have been enabled to create a meaningful and positive academic dialogue. The opportunity for such an appropriately differentiated and nuanced dialogue will then have been missed (Singh, 2016; Qi, 2015; Meng, 2012).

However, in line with the very nature of critical scholarship, the kind of linguistically and theoretically synthesised critical thinking pursued is not specified in general terms. For critical thinking reflects human creativity as well as science; it is as unpredictable as the wind, as intense as light, but within the process of reasoning, however creative or systematised, a logical force may well result from intuition but at the same time is able to mobilise evidence and logic to make its case. The assumptions and inferences of postgraduate critical thinking need to be clear. However as long as this criterion is fulfilled, there is no requirement to use a fixed form of critical thinking for academic analysis. Chinese modes of critical thinking have followed paths of their own. Ancient Chinese views of the world formulated views that were of similar philosophical weight to the views of the Ancient Greeks (Huang, 2011). Coming down to today, the postgraduate research students wrestles with conflicting traditions and is left to ‘figure it out’ (Meng, 2012).
A fundamental point informs and drives this study is: What is the aim of critical education? It is not just to become adept in using English. It is to truly understand the underlying motives and methods of critically analysing information and forming conclusions from it. It is to develop mature habits of mind that will empower international students from China to participate in international dialogue with the aid of their existing Chinese critical thinking and knowledge.

To address the above scenario, the thesis takes up the issue of the way international postgraduate students from China, together with Western critical pedagogy, equip themselves to become independent and knowledgeable participants in international intellectual interchange, using Chinese modes of critical thinking. Such a context may be envisaged on the basis of the research questions set out below.

1.5 Research questions

To respond to the research problem and focus, the two main research questions are as follows. The main question guides the search for evidence as the project unfolds:

How might the presupposition of intellectual equality with regard to postgraduate research students from China studying in Anglophone universities be verified through Chinese modes of critical thinking?

Out of this main research question, the following contributory research questions evolve:

1. What type of Chinese modes of critical thinking can be generated from Chinese contemporary popular culture, and how does such popular critical thinking operate? (Chapter Five)

2. What constrains Chinese international postgraduate students’ critical thinking performance in Anglophone defined learning and research? (Chapter Six)
3. What modes of critical thinking find expression in learning and research of postgraduate students from China, and how can this engagement to be extended to a reciprocal approach to learning, research and teaching? (Chapter Seven)

These research questions are designed to show how Chinese modes of critical thinking can be applied as analytical tools to extend their critical thinking capacity in an Anglophone university context. Working definitions of key terms are set out in the next section.

1.6 Working definitions of key concepts

This section explains the working definition of the key concepts, including, critical thinking; Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking; Chinese modes of critical thinking; critical actors; Anglophone university; multilingual education and multilingual students; and critical actors. This study is inspired by Weber’s inductive method (1992, cited in Singh & Harreveld, 2014) for coming to understand what a concept might mean. Therefore, while starting with a working definition of series of key concepts, this thesis develops these concepts’ meanings through the analysis of the data. No attempt is made to pre-determine the meaning of concepts by using abstract, generic principles, but to draw out meanings through evidence.

1.6.1 Critical thinking

There are various definitions of ‘critical thinking.’ Ennis (1962) defines critical thinking as involving reasonable and reflective thinking which focuses on deciding what to believe or do. Siegel (2009) argues that critical thinking embodies rationality on the base of open-mindedness. Paul and Elder (2008) see critical thinking as the art of ‘analysing and evaluating a thought with a view of improving it’ (p. 4). To draw out this definition, Moore (2013) sees critical thinking as comprising seven components: judgment; scepticism; a simple originality; sensitive readings or
interpretations; rationality; an active engagement with knowledge; and self-reflexivity. Chui (2009) argues that critical thinking involves critical examination of a statement by examining ‘its assumptions, the accuracy of supportive evidence and the logical reasoning advanced in reaching conclusions, with sensitivity to situated contexts’ (p. 44). It is a process of continuous progressive thinking (p. 44). Willingham (2007) views critical thinking as seeing both sides of an issue and not being satisfied with a settled perspective. It is ‘open to new evidence that disconfirms your ideas, reasoning dispassionately, demanding that claims be backed by evidence, deducing and inferring conclusions from available facts, solving problems’ (p. 8). As a higher order thinking habit that questions assumptions, critical thinking is described as ‘thinking about thinking’ (Howard, Tang & Austin, 2015, p. 134)—thus a process of metacognition. A basic definition of critical thinking could be: ‘the ability to interpret, analyse and evaluate ideas and arguments’ (Fisher, 2011, p. v). Yet critical thinking reflects personal education, and to say that a student does not demonstrate critical thinking or does not have a good ability in critical thinking need not imply that the student is incapable of acquiring a critical thinking capability.

Critical thinking is a skill that may have implications for the attainment of social goals (Moore, 2013; Boltanski, 2013). It involves not only skills but dispositions or attitudes characterised by scepticism, curiosity and openness to multiple perspectives—with the implication that understanding a concept would involve challenge, testing or questioning (Fairbrother, 2003, p. 608). Siegel (2009) adds that critical thinking is ‘not just the competent evaluation of reasons already available, but also the disposition to so evaluate, and to seek and produce further reasons, evidence and arguments relevant to candidate beliefs’ (p. 29).

By its very advocacy of independent conception of ideas and unfettered reasoning, ‘critical thinking’ will resist precise definition. Thus critical scholarship and critical practice are likely to remain fragmented, with various schools of thought.

However, as far as international students from China are concerned, a common issue may be described as a tendency for educators to teach critical thinking in defined ways, and to test knowledge and practice in critical thinking according to set agendas
where certain type of ideas in a certain type of language are given very significant weight. Singh & Lu (in press) argue that the critical thinking of international students from China studying in Anglophone universities is assessed in a second language with reference to unfamiliar educational premises. Tian & Low (2011) hold that these students are disadvantaged by a difference between measurements, pedagogies and research approaches in Anglophone universities. In order to make the issue more salient, it seems particularly important to clearly define various terms which can help to juxtapose, on the one hand, the modes of critical thinking expressed in Chinese by students from China, and on the other hand, Western modes of thinking, intellectuality and the academy expressed in English. Accordingly, this thesis focuses on two key phrases: ‘Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking’ and ‘Chinese modes of critical thinking’, which are explained in the following sections.

1.6.2 'Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking'

The term ‘Western’ no longer represents a fixed and easy identifiable entity. Merriam and Kim (2008) argue that distinguishing ‘Western’ from ‘non-Western’ is a ‘Western’ activity, albeit with differing geographical and cultural reference. The blurred boundaries of ‘the West’ relate to the spread of Western knowledge through colonisation and, more recently, globalisation. Lewis and Wigen (cited in Bonnett, 2004) see ‘the changeable boundaries of the West becoming co-terminous with the circumference of the world’ (p. 8), while dominance imposed by Western systems of knowledge has ‘resulted in non-attention to, if not outright dismissal of, other systems, cosmologies, and understandings about learning and knowing’ (Merriam & Kim, 2008, p.72). Nobel Laureate human development scholar Amartya Sen (2009) relates how Western critical theorists reluctant to engage in ‘non-Western’ theorising, characterising his attempt to engage non-Western theory as ‘eccentric’ (cited in Singh & Huang, 2013, p.203).

The term ‘Anglophone’ describes communities where English is the native language. Anglophone countries not only have the advantage of ready access to English as the global academic lingua franca which in many ways continues the role of Latin in scientific and other academic fields, but enjoy an education system where students
develop active literacy in English (Selvi, 2010). The critical thought of scholars who are able to publish in English accordingly tends to have a disproportionately significant role in international academic publishing.

Mindful of the slippery boundary of the term ‘Western’ and ‘Anglophone’, this study particularly uses the term ‘Western Anglophone mode of critical thinking’ to refer to critical ideas, theories that were used and valued in English largely in those are commonly accepted as Western countries, especially in Australia, England and America.

1.6.3 Chinese modes of critical thinking

Critical thinking is commonly practiced in China nowadays, yet the forms of critical analysis and exposition differ markedly from Western Anglophone practices (please see chapter two). Even the translation of the term ‘critical thinking’ is a matter of debate among many internationally minded Chinese educators, because there seem to be no Chinese theoretical concepts to communicate the full meaning of ‘critical thinking’ as it does in English (Du, 2014).

In this thesis, the concept ‘Chinese modes of critical thinking’ is designated to describe critical thinking expressed in the Chinese (language) in China and elsewhere, and/or used in English learning and research by native speakers of Chinese (language). This attempt is parallel with Jullien’s (2014) argument which expresses a mode of thinking in terms of the concept of 'Chinese thought,' designating 'the thought which has been expressed in Chinese,' just as ‘Greek thought is that expressed in Greek’ (p. 147). However, this is not to imply that such modes of critical thinking are necessarily tied to the Chinese language or speakers of the language in China; nor is it to claim that such modes of critical thinking necessarily express a peculiarly Chinese ethno-national essence. The concept of ‘Chinese modes of critical thinking’ merely draws attention to the existence of modes of critical thinking in Chinese (language), that at least some of students who speak this
language bring to the fore from the prior knowledge they acquired in China, as an education recourse to extend their capabilities in this regard.

It should be stressed that the argument explored in this thesis regarding ‘Chinese modes of critical thinking’ should not be mistaken as a claim for cultural relativism, universalism or uniformity (Jullien, 2014; Marginson & Sawir, 2011). Cultural relativism argues on critical thinking that particular modes of critical perspective and practice can only be understood and operated by a certain cultural group (Jullien, 2014). Yet Chinese modes of critical thinking are not possessed solely by China and need not be characterised as ‘China-specific’. For instance, it can be understood by English speaking researchers when it is properly introduced, deployed and theorised. Universalist claims on critical thinking holding that everyone should follow principles based on research, ignoring the fact that such research has been carried out by a small minority of the world’s population (Bessant & Watts, 2014). Some nation-specific modes of critical thinking tend to be presented as universally applicable. Some countries have opted to market pre-packaged ‘critical thinking’ commodities that trade in supposedly pre-established universal principles (Marginson, 2013). But such claims to universality tend to erode the prospects for global intellectual communities to form common understanding and practices of critical thinking. Then there is the reality of a uniformity that promotes mainstream values, beliefs and practices while marginalising other elements, suffocating divergent resources possessed by multiple cultural entities, and ultimately making the mainstream a non-transformable ‘dead culture’ (Jullien, 2014, p.142).

In the contrast, the ‘Chinese modes of critical thinking’ can be used by anyone who knows Chinese (language) and are in no way restricted to Chinese ethno-nationals. Singh (2017) understands the modes of critical thinking expressed in Chinese (language) are likely to have their equivalent critical nature in English and other linguistic/cultural contexts. That is to say, the ‘Chinese modes of critical thinking’ may share a similar linguistic-theoretical significance as ‘Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking’ in the global critical knowledge system.

The argument advanced in this thesis is that with the internationalisation of teaching and learning, critical thinking is likely to be benefit from pedagogical negotiation.
established on a base of intellectual equality. Of course this will require multiple instances of accommodation. In the case of international students from China, postgraduate students in particular, can apply modes of critical thinking from their intellectual heritage in their studies in Anglophone universities. In the process they will no doubt acquire deeper understanding of Chinese modes of critical thinking as they engage in discussion with their English-speaking interlocutors.

**1.6.4 Anglophone universities**

English as a medium for learning and teaching is the subject of extensive research with a view to helping advance students' and researchers' ability to compete in a global academic scene, in China and elsewhere (Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Jin & Cortazzi, 2002, Hu & Alsagoff 2010). Accordingly, Anglophone universities in Anglophone countries are attractive to international students from other non-English speaking countries because of such access along with literacy in English (Kim, 2011). This study sees Anglophone universities as a teaching, learning and researching environment which uses almost exclusively English, with less realization and/or acknowledgement of the critical thinking and theories that are communicated through other languages. In practice, for speakers of Chinese, which has no genetic relationship with Indo-European languages, English is China's main vehicle for global communication. Nevertheless, over the last hundred and fifty years China has absorbed vast areas of lexical terms and taxonomical information from English and other European languages, while Chinese has also lent certain terms to English.

On the other hand, speakers of English have less incentive to learn a second language than speakers of other languages. There can be a tendency to rely on a common Anglophone dominant ‘monolingual’ condition in the educational field (Selvi, 2010; Yildiz, 2012). Native English speaking academics who think in the language they write, confronted with awkward expressions and grammatical errors by second language users of English, may view the non-native as a ‘defective communicator, limited by an underdeveloped communicative competence’ (Selvi, 2010, p. 156). Translation into English may be inadequate, and if non-Anglophone ‘intellectual
antagonisms are not explicitly included in the translated text,’ theoretical concepts may be ‘open to misreading’ by Anglophone academics in Anglophone universities (Singh & Huang, 2013, p. 206). By comparison with the multilingual nature of Europe, ‘propelling English forward and dispossessing other languages’ can result in ‘diglossic domain loss’ (Phillipson, 2006, p. 13) and a levelling out of the nuances of meaning that other European languages convey. Coleman (2006) points out that a trend to use English as an academic lingua franca even in European universities would be ‘inefficient for social discourse, and damaging to social identity and personal status’ (p. 1).

1.6.5 Multilingual education and multilingual students

Anglophone universities enrol international students with cross-language (bi/multilingual) and cross-culture (intercultural) capabilities. But a supposedly multilingual education does not happen naturally by simply putting various students together in a classroom or a research team (Klapwijk & Walt, 2016; Shohamy, 2011). According to Yildiz (2012), a true multilingual condition is a vision that still remains to be achieved. Thus increasing attention has to be given to explore the strategies of engaging students' multilingual capabilities to create a space where the common pool of linguistic knowledge is valued (Canagarajah, 2011; Yildiz, 2012, Singh, 2016). A similar investment of effort can be found in research on intercultural education. There is a growing number of studies on applying theoretical resources from various systems of culture and knowledge system to Australian higher education, in order to add new perspectives in multilingual education (Meng, 2012; Qi, 2015; Salter, 2014; Manathunga, 2015).

This study uses the term multilingual education to refer to an ideal total university environment that accepts learning, research and teaching in a number of languages. In such an environment, languages other than English, and cultures other than Western culture, are visible and audible. The study refers to the academic interaction between two languages, English and Chinese; as well as the 'cross-language' exchange of theoretical resources, as ‘multilingual education’.

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In this study, international students from China are considered as cross-lingual, even multilingual students. In addition to speaking English and Chinese, most of them speak another Chinese dialect and/or have learnt another foreign language other than English. Their experiences of Chinese modes of critical thinking can be, and need to be activated, mobilised and deployed in English-only monolingual Anglophone universities.

1.6.6 Critical actors

The term 'critical actors' here, adapted from the ‘social actors’ of Boltanski (2011), claims the focus of this study. It is also informed by the idea of critical ‘emancipated spectators’ (Rancière, 2009). But this study's insistence on ‘actors’ rather than ‘spectators' recognises that critical investigators can do more than just observe from a distance; they can actively initiate engagement with critical thinking practices. 'Critical actors' in this thesis is a generic term that includes all participants in critical social or educational thinking and practices, including, but not limited to, media reporters, book authors, students and educators.

1.7 Note on research method

The form of the research questions presented in terms of ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ have provided important hints for the most relevant research strategy here. Yin (2014) observes that if the research questions focus on ‘what’ questions, the research can be viewed as an exploratory study concerning developing applicable propositions for further inquiry. ‘How’ and ‘why’ questions are more explanatory. These types of questions are likely to lead to the use of case studies. In the meantime, since this study aims to explore multiple perspectives of the ‘complexity and uniqueness’ of a particular educational problem in a ‘real life context’, according to Simon (2009), a case study method is preferable. The case in this study is the Chinese modes of critical thinking that have been brought by postgraduate students from China.
A flexible research design has been chosen as appropriate for the research problem and questions to be addressed in this case study (Robson, 2002). The research is conducted in two sequentially stages, namely, analysis of a cultural artefact (a novel) and interviews. The interviews (n=23) collect data from postgraduate students (n=6) and their educators (n=3) from China, as well as postgraduate students (n=12) and their educators (n=2) from Australia.

Throughout the study, research principles were followed to ensure the rigour of the research. Factors considered include validity, reliability and triangulation. Ethical procedures were adopted to protect participants. Data analysis was concerned with the following steps:

**Table 1.1: Data analysis steps**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing a conceptual framework</td>
<td>Emerson, Fretz &amp; Shaw, 2011, Yin, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data coding</td>
<td>Saldaña, 2009; Berg 2007; Strauss &amp; Corbin, 2004; Willman 2011; Bernard &amp; Ryan, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis writing</td>
<td>Emerson, Fretz &amp; Shaw, 201; Singh, 2014; Li, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data display</td>
<td>Miles &amp; Huberman, 1994; Verdinelli &amp; Scagnoli, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verification of findings and draw conclusions</td>
<td>Miles &amp; Huberman, 1994, Qi, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report writing</td>
<td>Emerson, Fretz &amp; Shaw, 2011; Bogdan &amp; Biklen’s 2007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the interest of a flexible research design, the data analysis methods were not necessarily used in a fixed linear order. Appropriate procedures were chosen for data analysis at certain points. Some procedures were applied more than once on the same
unit of evidence. Steps interacted with one another to inform and advance the analysis. Developing a conceptual framework was significantly shaped in the data analysis procedure throughout the whole study. Data was read interpretively, reflexively and interactively through data coding. Analysis writing helped to make sense, organize and link data, concepts, literature and explanation in relation to research questions. Suitable ways to display the data—figures, tables and concept maps—were used to facilitate the process of analysis. The verification of findings was informed by the methods of clustering, noting relations between variables, making conceptual coherence, checking the meaning of outliers, and checking for researcher effects respectively (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These methods were cross-checked with the data analysis, so as to mitigate researcher bias and improve the rigour of the study. Lastly, this research report critically and has creatively assembled the analysis so that it forms a coordinated, coherent storyline (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011).

The research design and method of this study seek to provide a comprehensive evidence-driven and theoretically engaging analysis of the research question. Methodologically, appropriate ethical concern for all the participants were demonstrated, against the backdrop of the awareness of the politicised character of the intellectual inequality into which this study was enquiring. This concern can be seen simultaneously as a counter-narrative to that inequality and as a strategy for redressing the balance in favor of the verification of intellectual equality. During the process of the data collection, data analysis, and thesis reporting, this study was open to unexpected evidence and was always open to critique.

The next section provides the thesis statement to be addressed in the evidentiary chapters.

1.8 Thesis statement

This study provides an account of issues relating to critical thinking by Chinese postgraduate students, in a largely Anglophone universities based on their
perspectives and experiences of critical thinking. The thesis argues that (international) postgraduate students from China may and can present their Chinese modes of critical thinking through Chinese language, as oppose to the unequal view of ‘uncritical “Chinese students”’.

Based on this study of Chinese mode of critical thinking, this thesis suggests that Chinese postgraduate students might be encouraged to access modes of critical thinking in relation to information networks and theoretical sources in Chinese as well as English. Accordingly, it offers a potential into a pedagogical basis for developing Chinese international postgraduate students’ capabilities for critical engagement. The thesis also calls for support for creative Australian-Chinese co-production of knowledge, using language and critical theories from Chinese intellectual circles as well as Western sources.

1.9 The significance of this study

For educators in Anglophone universities, a longstanding question has been how to solve the problem of critical thinking in the course of teaching and communication with international students from China (Fairbrother, 2003; Goode, 2007; Singh & Lu, in press). Australian universities for example emphasise transmission Western Anglophone modes of critical knowledge in English to students who are mostly from China. Similarly, students are conditioned to regard learning English and Western knowledge as their priority academic goals. However, these pedagogical and learning approaches miss opportunities to engage divergent intellectual and intercultural modes of critical thinking that are supposedly the aims of international education (Singh & Meng, 2011; Marginson, 2009).

The sheer number of Chinese international students in Australia makes their problems of being uncritical and their Chinese modes of critical thinking particularly worth bringing to the notice of Australian higher educational institutions. In recent years China has continued to be the largest single national contributor to Australia’s international student population (Department of Immigration & Citizenship, 2011).
In 2007, about 80 per cent of international students in Australia came from Asia, 21 per cent coming from Mainland China (Bradley, 2008); but by 2014, the percentage of international students from mainland China had increased to 33.8 per cent (Department of Education & Training, 2016).

Also, it is not only the number of Chinese international students in Australia that make this study significant. They are beginning to impact on the educational sector. They are, with the right support, bringing with them their language and intellectual resources to bear in Australian universities (Singh, 2009; Singh & Han, 2010; Meng, 2012). The significance of this thesis lies in being able to add a small but nonetheless important element to this project for introducing Chinese cross-language dialogue in various avenues, particularly Australian research and education. The research actively takes postgraduate students from China as knowers and contributors of critical knowledge equally with their Western Anglophone peers and educators, by proposing pedagogical alternatives to make use of their intellectual assists, so as to contribute to a divergent educational context.

Meanwhile, the educational phenomenon of intellectual inequality, which construes Chinese students as uncritical, can be related or transferred to a larger population of students from other countries, especially Asian countries. Writing from a university in Japan, David Rear (2016) outlines a method for developing the critical thinking skills of students from non-English backgrounds:

“In an era of internationalisation, in which Western universities are actively seeking students from around the globe, helping international students to develop the skills necessary to thrive in this new intellectual environment is vital, emerging as a top priority concern for many institutions. Students from Asian backgrounds are said to have particular difficulty in adapting to the demands of the Western academic tradition, with educational background and insufficient language skills commonly cited as the most significant factors.” (italics added) (p. np).

Likewise, Yan and Berliner (2011a; 2011b) report on the students from ‘non-European, developing, Eastern country’ have similar problems of being less critical as Chinese students. An understanding amongst some researchers in Anglophone universities is that students from Confucian education background would be in need of remedy in their capabilities for critical thinking (Yan & Berliner, 2011a, Tran,
2013). In this sense, researching into this educational phenomenon might not only provide new perspectives into evaluating international students from China, but be informative to other population of students that is held against such intellectual inequality.

The thesis adds new insights to the generation of new learning and teaching alternatives through critical exploration of Chinese modes of critical thinking. To achieve this will require students to be aware of their own intellectual heritage and to improve their own level of understanding of Chinese modes of critical thinking. Further, being able to discuss academic and general aspects of China's culture with Western interlocutors—their educators and fellow students—will mean learning to express in effective English what they know in Chinese. Educators interested in dialogues on Chinese topics of interest with students committed to genuine learning and critical exchange can develop a nuanced divergent cross-language intercultural educational context. In this sense, the project develops a nuanced understanding of the engagement of Chinese modes of critical thinking, and the prospects for using Chinese theoretic-linguistic resources to verify the presupposition of intellectual equality (Rancière, 1991).

1.10 Overview of thesis structure

This research set out in this thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge in the area of research through

- providing a sufficient study of the topic through a review of literature;
- explaining and justifying how the methods adopted are suitable for the research topic;
- suitably set out the research findings, accompanying them with adequate exposition, and discussing the findings critically in the context of the discipline.
explaining and justifying how research has been correctly implementing in the evidentiary chapters. (Western Sydney University, 2016.)

This Introduction chapter has explained the research problem, research focus and research questions; it has delimited the scope of the study, defines key concepts and explains the significance of the research.

Chapter Two, the Literature Review, forms an array of interconnected topics to inform the development of the study, keeping in mind previous and future developments in the academic field. The chapter introduces debate over perceptions of lack of critical thinking by ‘Chinese students’ and suggests possibilities for effective dialogue between international students from China, particularly postgraduate students, and their Western educators. The chapter sets the scene for informed theoretical and empirical investigation of the topic.

Chapter Three describes the proposed theoretical framework for an informed critical analysis of assembled evidence. The conceptual framework draws on concepts from the following authors: Fay (1975); Rancière (1991, 2009); Bourdieu (1984, 2003); Luc Boltanski (2011); Singh (2008, 2011a, 2011b); Jullien (2014); and Yildiz (2012). The novel interconnection of these diverse scholars’ concepts in the thesis guides the process of collection of data and the use of tools for data analysis.

Chapter Four explains the methodology used in the study, justifying the research strategy and design, together with analytical comment. This chapter notes the principles followed to ensure the rigour of the research as well as research ethics.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven are evidentiary chapters. Chapter Five explores the Chinese novel *The Empress of the Palace: Zhen Huan Zhuan* (Liu Lianzi, 2007). It discusses ways in which modes of critical thinking illustrated in the novel might be a resource for international students from China to engage in critical learning and research, particularly for postgraduate students interested in pursuing deeper implications of the novel’s approach.
Chapter Six focuses on motives for international students from China, and especially postgraduate students, to critically engage their existing knowledge in Australian higher education, and disprove any possible imputation that Chinese students are intellectually unequal (Rancière, 1991)—any imputation that might even amount to a deficit perception that they have an inability for critical thinking related to a lack of critical sense in their own culture, or some inability of the Chinese language to express critical thought. Unfortunately, many students from China are convinced of a need to abandon their existing critical methods of critical analysis in order to acquire a totally new intellectual apparatus. At the same time students may assign a purely material value to their study of English and their knowledge of Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking, believing that such knowledge is likely to imply better occupational or social outcomes from their education. Such an unthinking acceptance of Western values at the expense of ‘顶天立地 (Dǐng tiān lì dì, standing tall with feet firmly on the ground)’, implying a firmly based spirit of adventure which will involve alternatives in learning and teaching.

Chapter Seven advocates a new Chinese-English synthesis in critical thinking represented by the Chinese concept of ‘兼容并济 (jiān róng bìng jì, ‘inclusive mutual reinforcement)’ and based on evidence of postgraduate students’ engagement of Chinese linguistic and theoretical in critical thought. Here the potential is shown for cross-language intercultural education to contribute to knowledge co-production out of the two divergent traditions. An alternative pedagogy is proposed to counter a stereotyped view of ‘Chinese students’ within the monolingual environment of Australian education; implement critical interventions based on postgraduate students’ ability for cross-language thinking; and interact with global scholarly counterparts.

Chapter Eight outlines the key findings from each evidentiary chapter and their implications, along with concerns raised during the course of the study. The chapter notes limitations of the research and identifies recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER TWO

DEBATES OVER CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS’ CAPABILITIES FOR CRITICAL THINKING

2.0 Introduction

The literature review conducted in this chapter provides an account of the intellectual context for the issues set out in the introductory chapter. That is, an inquiry concerning Chinese students’ extent of applying critical thinking in Australian higher education. Von Brocke et al. (2009) point out that a literature review makes ‘a vital contribution to the relevance and rigour’ of research; they argue that ‘relevance is improved by avoiding the reinvestigation of what is already known,’ and ‘rigour is derived from an effective use of the existing knowledge base’ (p. 2206). This chapter aims to inform the topic of study and inquire into the current state of research, in order to refine an approach that is both relevant and rigorous, as it makes decisions on the literature that is to be included in the study or excluded from it. Writing on the topic, the search for relevant resources was mostly conducted using the Google Scholar digital library.

The corpus of literature reviewed in this chapter is used to define and develop understandings of the research issues in order to permit connections to research findings as they emerge in later chapters (O’Leary, 2014). The chapter poses the following questions:

1. What is the importance of capabilities for critical thinking in international higher education?
2. How are the capabilities for critical thinking of Chinese international students construed in a Western environment?
3. What is the global educational context in which Chinese international students participate?
4. What assessment criteria are used to interpret and evaluate the capabilities of Chinese international students studying in Anglophone universities?
5. What is the nature of the Chinese mode of critical thinking presented in the literature?
6. Does the West appropriate critical thinking in an educational and political context, and if so, in what ways does it do this?
7. Finally, what does research literature reveal of the potential of pedagogical strategies to engage Chinese critical resources and Chinese students’ capabilities for critical thinking?

2.1 Critical thinking in higher education

Critical thinking is a necessary strategy for studying in universities. Dwyer, Boswell, and Elliott (2015) argue that skills in critical thinking enable students to understand the complexity of the knowledge they encounter and also use knowledge strategically. Critical thinking typically involves use of the knowledge students already have as intellectual material to produce innovation (Alguezau & Filieri, 2014). Through critical thinking, students can reshape and recombine knowledge in order to inform effective decision-making. There is a prevalent view that this critical thinking capability develops spontaneously as students are immersed in an academic environment, but Heijltjes et al. (2014) argue that universities should ideally make a point of teaching critical thinking explicitly. In any case, the capabilities for critical thinking are greatly valued by universities.

Abrami et al. (2008) argue that critical thinkers ‘have a better future as functional and contributing adults’ and thus critical thinking is often regarded as ‘a fundamental aim and an overriding ideal of education’ (pp. 2206-2207). Along with Written Communication, Problem Solving and Interpersonal Understandings, Critical Thinking is listed in Graduate Skills Assessment (GSA) as one of four areas to be assessed in in higher education in Australia (Nelson, 2003). In terms of the purpose of education, the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians specifies successful critical learners as:
—able to think deeply and logically, and obtain and evaluate evidence in a disciplined way as the result of studying fundamental disciplines
—creative, innovative and resourceful, and are able to solve problems in ways that draw upon a range of learning areas and disciplines
—able to make sense of their world and think about how things have become the way they are (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 8).

Lloyd and Nan (2010) state that critical thinking has gained ‘heightened attention in higher education’ as educators have ‘purposefully integrated critical thinking into student activities, particularly assessment items’ (p. 2).

In Western universities, all students, including international students, are expected to be empowered to think critically. Yet at this point the question must arise of whether ‘critical thinking’ is a function and an ideal defined exclusively in the Western intellectual tradition. To Raineri (2015), the privileges of Western-centric modes of critical thinking, in neglecting non-Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking, ‘discourage consideration of, if not outright ignoring, the fabulous minds and contributions that are at risk of being lost’ to study and research (p. 105), Thus ‘critical thinking’ is narrowed to predetermined Western-centric assumptions.

Ironically, such Western-centric modes of critical thinking that ignore the wellsprings of thought along lines favoured by other cultures actually tend to suppress the impulses of innovation and creativity defined by critical thinking itself. Lloyd and Nan (2010) report that educators and students might ‘perceive critical thinking in different ways,’ and this might ‘limit its achievement as a critical graduate attribute’ (p. 2). Yet some Western Anglophone educators perceive their main responsibility as transferring Western Anglophone framings of critical thinking to less-than-critical non-Western students (Singh 2009, 2011).

Nevertheless, to stand back from issues of how critical thinking may be framed in the Western academic world as well as in other cultures, this capability is widely acknowledged as an intellectual faculty that needs to be expanded across international higher education and at the same time deepened in intensity and application. The following section examines how researchers in this discipline construct capabilities for critical thinking of Chinese international students studying
in British, United States and Australian universities. Chinese students are often criticised for their inability to engage in critical thinking (Tran, 2013; Clark & Gieve, 2006) as well as their poor English language skills (Tse et al. 2010; Alison & Lee 2014). The failure of these students to engage in critical thinking is attributed to what are seen as deficiencies in China’s education system which is said to produce passive, uncritical and disengaged learners (Fairbrother, 2003; Huang, 2013; Liu & Hu 2005).

2.2 The construction of Chinese students as uncritical and disengaged

There is a body of literature which characterises international students from China as generally uncritical. For instance, Asmar (2005) argues that universities in Australia see many international students needing remedial education to compensate for deficits due to their lack of critical thinking skills, as well as their inability to produce focused writing, absence of academic honesty and a dearth of strategies for deep learning. The People’s Daily (Overseas Edition, 2010) reports a statement by then President Levin of Yale University at the Fourth Chinese-Foreign University Presidents Forum that Chinese international students were lacking in capabilities for critical thinking. Similarly, Egege and Kutieleh (2004) note complaints by Australian academics about a lack of critical thinking among international students from Asia, with an argument that teaching critical thinking to Chinese students means ‘teaching foreign notions to foreign students’ (p. 75). Clark and Gieve (2006) argue that Chinese international students are regarded by their Australian educators as ‘lacking in the capacity for critical thinking;’ these students’ ‘failure’ in this regard is attributed to the cultural background for being Chinese students, and that Western education can ‘remedy [their] deficiencies’ in critical thinking (p. 56). This ‘failure’ became a particular concern in 2015 when 3 out of 4 students who failed the course business critical thinking in Sydney University were from Mainland China (Griffits, 2015). The Deputy Dean of business school said these students are from a very different educational background of which does not promote ‘critical thinking approach’ (Griffits, 2015). These comments lead to a possible problemisation, a cultural deficit view, in two parts: Are Chinese students in fact
deficient in a capability for critical thinking? And, why does this become apparent when Chinese international students go to study in Western universities?

Supervisors from a British university have indicated that ‘developing criticality is a very slow process’ for some Chinese students (Goode, 2007, p. 595). Liu (2014) argues that teachers’ authority over knowledge does not work as an educational facilitator, but rather an obstacle, and that this in turn limits Chinese students’ capabilities for critical thinking. Similarly, Lee et al. (2008) consider that China’s authoritarian education system, and the pressure for conformity, may not be conducive to the development of creative and analytical thinking. This is part of the reason why Chinese international students find it ‘difficult to adopt the “new” model of learning after entering tertiary education’ (p. 33). It can be a cultural shock for them to shift from teacher-centred education to student-centred learning, including self-regulated discovery methodologies. Tian and Low (2011) note a paradox where Chinese university teachers avoided teaching critical thinking because it was not emphasised or required in examination, ‘even though as academics, they placed a high value on it and saw it as something they recognised that they ought to be teaching’ (p. 69).

This chapter now goes on to review the scholarly debate relating to the proposition that Chinese international students studying in Western universities (largely in Britain, the United States and Australia) are lacking in a capability for engaging in critical thinking in largely British, USA and Australian universities. To view Chinese students from different angles, different constructions emerge. Each of the following constructionS provides a possible explanation as to why Chinese students are perceived as uncritical.

2.2.1 An educationally deficient system

China’s rote learning system is held to be antithetical to the critical thinking demonstrated by Anglophone Western universities. Durkin (2008) says that Chinese education system takes knowledge as ‘absolute, defined by an authority as right or wrong’ and ‘expects expository teaching with the focus on content and reproduction of material in their assignments’ (p. 18). Likewise, Liu and Hu (2005) report that
teachers in China have to use textbook and examination to ‘measure the mere apparent achievements [through grades] from students…and for the sake of standardising the bar’ (p. 10). They argue that there is mostly always one correct answer to the questions on examination papers, so teachers avoid the ‘diversity of critical thinking’ in order to ‘systematise the correct answer’ to those questions (p. 10). Huang (2013) argues that ‘a test-driven approach is still strongly existent in the Chinese classroom’ where ‘parents and teachers often gravitate toward spoon-fed styles of teaching that promote the pattern of rote memorisation’ (p. 252).

A study by Fairbrother (2003) finds that Chinese students agreed that ‘indoctrination’ was part of their secondary schooling; some students claimed that some textbook information was implanted in their minds, so that when a topic was mentioned the answer was instantly triggered without thinking (p. 613). Kirkpatrick and Zang (2011) argue that this particular pedagogical approach ‘can stifle a student's imagination, creativity, and sense of self’—which are critical qualities for a student to achieve success in and out of the classroom (p. 43). Tran (2013) relates that Chinese students are viewed as ‘perplexed, deficient and handicapped by some Western scholars’, because the Chinese education system de-motivates them from ‘adopting a deep approach or thinking critically’ (p.59). Wong (2016) argues that Chinese examination-oriented education halts ‘students’ thinking and exploring during the learning process,’ and pressures a teacher to feel he or she has to ‘give lessons focused on tests and examinations’ (p. 256). Ryan and Viete (2009) similarly argue that such text-driven pedagogy depresses students’ critical thinking skills as well as enthusiasm to pursue a search for new possibilities, reinforcing a stubborn intellectual inertia. Research by Turner (2006) in fact found that high-achieving Chinese students may even show a ‘decline in critical commitment-engagement over the course of an undergraduate degree’ rather than the opposite—calling in question underlying assumptions about the kinds of students who should be considered high-achievers (p. 4).

Researchers studying Chinese students’ critical capability commonly criticise teacher-centred pedagogy. Deng and Pei (2009) note that under the ‘whole classroom teaching mode,’ students are expected to ‘hide their curiosity and self-identity and try to be same as others (students)’ (p. 319). Wang (2006) suggests that Chinese
educational culture encourages respect for authority and advocates conformity, and so students are required to respect teachers and listen quietly and carefully in class. Xie argues that ‘the social participation structure socialised the students into being a particular type of learner [where] the teachers had absolute authority over them and [the students say] things only when being asked to and to say things that the teachers wanted to hear’ (cited in Tian & Low, 2011, p. 69). Zhao and Mcdougall (2008) note that Chinese students prefer to ‘respond closely to the instructor’s question.’ As a result, even if their critical responses are different from the textbook, they may still ‘not go beyond the instructors’ expectation and thus sound uncritical’ (p. 64).

Research has revealed that Chinese students’ capabilities for critical thinking are also restrained by their training to value themselves according to their grade they are given. Liu and Hu (2005) note how a student’s standing is established according to his or her grades, the student’s self-confidence tends to rest on ‘recognition from others, instead of trusting in his/her individual potential,’ and hence to be more fragile (p. 11). In relation to solving problems independently by ‘accessing, interpreting and applying information learned primarily through a self-directed investigation of the resources currently available’. Marsh and Rowlinson (1997) find students in China lack confidence in their ability to do this (p. 397). Yan and Berliner (2011b) find that ‘hard work’ is a most frequently identified motivator for Chinese students in the United States, and this impedes their critical engagement in class and outside (p. 179). They find these students believe that ‘good grades bring a feeling of self-esteem and self-worth, and that ‘education is the only hope for social acceptance’ (Yan & Berliner, 2011a, p. 179). In Bodycott’s (2012) analysis, it follows that other critical discussion and involvement that do not guarantee a good grade will be considered a ‘distraction’ (p. 358).

Such accounts of the Chinese education system, with the roles of students and teachers in the system, have widely gained the status of a conventional insight into the difficulties faced in critical thinking. However, at the same time the research literature also evidences diverse diagnoses. Mathias, Bruce and Newton (2013) argue that what they identify as ‘Chinese students’ learning strategy’ is ‘more complicated than it looks on the surface,’ leading to inadequate and confused understanding by Western educators and researchers (p. 222) In their study of
Confucian education, Li and Wegerif (2014) see the image of China’s education as a system of rote learning as deriving from students’ quiet behaviour in class; yet this quiet learning is intended to lead to understanding in depth of ‘the form of inner dialogue between multiple voices in the context of relationships and responsibilities,’ and its significance may have been overlooked ‘simply because it does not fit easily with more demonstrative and individualistic traditions of teaching thinking familiar in the West’ (p. 22). It is worth noting Sit’s (2013) point that in China’s educational tradition, there remains a tradition that students should ‘value thoughtful questions which they ask after sound reflection’ (p. 38). Thus to characterise Chinese education as implying non-participative rote learning is simplistic.¹

2.2.2 Anxiety and exclusion

Research studies have pointed out a feeling of anxiety and exclusion from the process of (largely Anglophone defined) education in the West education as a reason for Chinese students’ unwillingness to participate in critical discussion. Spiro (2014) points out that ‘loneliness and isolation emerge as significant factors’ in the experience of international students (p. 66), making it difficult for them to engage in critical intellectual interaction with their peers. ‘The rhetoric of education internationalisation,’ in the words of De Vita, ‘hides the fact that intercultural interaction, in and outside the classroom, is not happening naturally’ (cited in Spiro, 2014, p. 66). Here Montgomery and McDowell (2009) note a general tendency for ethnic groups to keep within familiar social networks rather than interacting with local English-speaking students. Clearly there exists a feeling of otherness: Chinese students have felt it ‘overwhelming’ to engage in critical and interpersonal interaction with their peers when they start studying in America (Yan & Berliner, 2011b, p. 537); they feel ‘impotent on many occasions because of their inability to cope with the new environment’ (Yan & Berliner, 2011a, p. 179); or in the words of one interviewed Chinese student who found herself ‘not ready to adapt psychologically to this environment where Americans are over-represented [sic] and

¹ However after dealing with Chinese student writing for over 20 years, and looking over the facts of how willing Chinese people are to accept propaganda, I think that it is largely quite justified. Mostly it is a question of acquiring degrees and status, according to a modern day 科举 mentality.
English is the predominant language’ (Yan & Berliner, 2011b, p. 537)—though representation by local students might seem to be a natural corollary of studying in the United States. Being young and having to cope with overseas study in an unfamiliar environment will be more stressful for some students than for others, and as Zhang (2012) notes, students who experience high levels of fear or anxiety in relation to communication with others have been shown to avoid critical engagement.

All this leaves aside the underlying teacher-student relationship. Issa (2009) finds that the ‘implied unchanging teacher/students power relationship’ in the classroom, means distancing educators from culturally diverse students and generates ‘low expectation towards the minority students.’ Meanwhile these students’ ‘ambivalence or insecurity about their identities’ may well lead them to actively resist dominant group values (p.17). In effect they are ‘alienated and excluded from higher education settings that are culturally new to them’ (Spiro, 2010, p. 67). Campbell and Li (2008) find that many lecturers do not appear to take responsibility to adapt to a ‘changing classroom culture’: this is left to newly arriving international students themselves. Such unwillingness by educators to engage in intercultural education, Campbell and Li argue, is an indication of ‘patronising attitudes and ethnocentric views’ (p. 392). Confused, and alienated from the mainstream educational group, students find that their Chinese language capabilities are no longer relevant, while their English ability is simply inadequate. They are in a linguistic no-man’s-land. And where safe spaces in classrooms are not provided, sensitive students may become even more introverted (Canagarjah, 2011).

2.2.3 Lack of relevant knowledge

Research also raises the question of whether Chinese students lack adequate understanding of what is implied by ‘critical thinking.’ Tian and Low (2011) find that some academics from Britain, the United States and Australia take it for granted that their students are familiar with the concept and practice of critical thinking. But

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2 Certainly they say they do.
they find that international students from East Asian countries are ‘unclear about how to “be critical” in an appropriate way, and thus become actively worried about their own critical thinking performance’ (p. 64). Tian and Low (2011) find Chinese student reticence and perceived ‘passivity’ in Western university classes are not due to ‘a desire not to participate, but rather a reaction to the more dialogic/ discursive teaching methods used’ (p. 69).

The literature provides further background to Chinese students’ delay in acquiring critical thinking in response to the professional demands of Western universities. Zhao and MacDougall (2008) point out that these students ‘may not know the theories, concepts, norms, terms, and so on of a particular academic discipline’ (Zhao & MacDougall, 2008, p. 65). O’Sullivan and Guo (2010) trace this problem back to their finding that Chinese students see critical thinking as ‘absent from Chinese education discourse at both secondary and postsecondary level.’ In the words of one interviewed student, ‘critical thinking was never formally introduced during Chinese classes.’ Yet her Anglophone professor’s comments on writing assignments ‘frequently made reference to lack of criticality’ (p. 54). Chan, Ho and Ku (2011) adduce ‘clear evidence’ showing that Chinese students exhibit a strong tendency to ‘devaluate or ignore counterarguments’ (p. 67), due to their lack of exposure to open-minded critical education training.

2.2.4. Poor English language skills

Chinese students’ silence in class is often interpreted as passivity and an unwillingness to participate in critical discussion (Floyd, 2011; Deng & Pei, 2009; Huang, 2013). So far this chapter has explained how educational background, emotional factors and unfamiliarity with critical practice contribute to an image of disengaged Chinese students. Another major factor obstructing demonstration of their capabilities for critical thinking is English language skills.

It is pointed out that Chinese students feel ‘uncomfortable speaking with native speakers of English’ in the classroom and outside (Mak, 2011, p. 210). Ping (2010) notes that their ‘silent in-class behaviour’ is seen as a barrier to critical learning practices, since critical participation is viewed as ‘an activity that develops
independent learning skills and the ability to apply knowledge.’ Chinese students’ silence during critical discussion is construed as ‘reluctance to participate’ in classroom contexts (p. 208). Liu and Jackson (2008) trace Chinese students’ fear of being negatively evaluated by their peers and educators as a reason for their unwillingness to engage in meaningful interaction.

There is a considerable body of research to show that critical thinking in a second language poses particular difficulties for students from China in particular for speakers of Chinese. These students have difficulties in achieving a level of 7.0 in the IELTS written examination, both General and Academic, even after completing a higher education course of study for three years or more (Leung, 2015). Liu (2007) argues that language barriers impede such students from engaging in critical interaction (Liu, 2007). Sherry, Thomas, and Chui (2010) find Chinese students reluctant to express themselves critically because they think they do not have sufficient proficiency in English to communicate with their lecturers or tutors and their fellow students. Tse et al. report that even in Hong Kong with its British heritage, ‘the average standard of reading English was below the international average’ (p. 181), and this hindered students’ engagement in English-based critical discussion in Western universities. Interviews and surveys conducted by Evan and Morrison (2011) showed particular difficulties for Chinese students during English-medium instruction in the crucial first year of study.

However, studies point to the danger of standardised English-only proficiency tests gauging Chinese student critical thinking ability, because in focusing on minimal measurement error such tests make invalid assumptions of second-language English competence (O’Loughlin, 2013). Alison and Lee (2014) note the apologies for English expression in ‘countless submissions for assessment by [Chinese] international students currently studying at Australian universities’ who know they ‘attract criticism for their efforts to communicate in English.’ This is compounded by a stereotyped construction of these students as ‘uncritical, rote and passive-learners who are linguistically unprepared for their study’ (p. 21).

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3 It is also reported that IELTS website released the statistic of Chinese students who achieved four 7s across four bands is 1 out of 100 (Leung, 2015).
Thus various impressions on critical thinking by Chinese students exist within the research literature: there are restraints related to how students have been educated in China, and limitations due to different study patterns and behavioural habits as they interact in Western society. Perhaps most painful of all is the need to function at university level in English - especially when the mind has to handle new terminology relating to very different intellectual traditions - knowing one lacks specific knowledge that is taken for granted in a Western environment.

There is a difference between the activity and practice of critical thinking on the one hand, and the capability or ability for critical thinking on the other. Surly there is hardly a way of proving all the Chinese students do or do not have a critical capacity. Research discussed in this section has argued a shortage in Chinese students’ critical ‘capabilities’ (Goode, 2007; Clark & Gieve, 2006; Tran, 2013; Lee, et al., 2008) and ‘practices’ (Liu & Hu, 2005; Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2011; Ryan & Viete, 2009). Nonetheless these sources indicate that some Western educators might feel justified in adopting a cultural deficit view (Silverman, 2011) in relation to the capability of Chinese international students for critical thinking. A cultural deficit model in essence will hold that underachievement relates to membership in a cultural group rather than the individual’s environment. It stems from negative beliefs and assumptions regarding the ability and aspiration because of perceived cultural deprivation or lack of exposure to cultural models (Irizarry, 2009). There is a claim that critical thinking can be a ‘foreign notion’ to Chinese students (Egege & Kutieleh, 2004) because they are ‘foreign students’ in the cultural model of critical thinking. Research largely attributes the deficit model of Chinese learner discourse to Confucian cultural and educational heritage (Tran, 2013; Clark & Gieve, 2006). To examine other research contributions however, the reality of situations faced by Chinese international students mean that successful adoption of critical thinking and critical practices is far from a simple matter.

Sherry, Thomas, and Chui (2010) argue that ‘international study can actually be harrowing for some students who experience a lack of understanding, racism, social exclusion, linguistic and cultural barriers,’ and these experiences negatively influence critical performance (p. 35). Tian and Low (2011) point out that under-performance as a result of such experiences may be misconstrued as ‘deficiency’ in
academic skills, where lecturers could make incomplete evaluation of students’ ability to think and to know.

Pedagogical, environmental and socio-cultural issues also exert a large influence. Stereotypes and pressure from local classmates or lecturers cause Asian international students’ reluctance to participate [critically] in class. (Liu, cited in Singh, 2013, p. 908)

Chinese international students enrolling in Anglophone universities have been assessed on the basis of their academic background as potentially capable of undertaking tertiary education in English, often with the proviso that they first undergo training in academic English. Yet they have not had to study a course in China called ‘Critical Thinking,’ nor is critical thinking a readily transferrable set of skills. The rest of this chapter reviews research literature that problematizes the criteria used to assess Chinese students’ critical thinking.

2.2.5 “Critically inadequate at an overall level”

Scholarly comments in China around how Chinese students should be described regarding their capabilities for critical thinking are proven to be another issue. Unfortunately, the perceived understanding of lacking critical thinking capabilities among international students from China is debated in a similar manner in Chinese higher education contexts. After Nytimes’ report on Standford University’s study which revealed Chinese students may excel in critical thinking, a Chinese newspaper interviewed professor Dong Yu, who had initiated critical thinking programs in Huazhong University of Technonlogy, one of the top universities in China. Dong (cited in Song, 2016) argues:

对国内的孩子而言，理性和开放的习性和能力都是弱项；在能力上，分析和推理等思维能力都缺乏训练...简单地说，落后是全面的，从批判性思维的精神到学术的能力，都缺乏。

Students in China have deficiencies in their capabilities for rationality and habits of open-mindedness; in terms of capabilities, they lack training in terms of analysis, reasoning and other thinking skills. Simply put, [the students] are critically inadequate at an overall level. They lack not only the critical disposition but also the academic capabilities [for thinking critically].
Similarly, Huang (2013) reports that in his study, measuring against the California Critical Thinking Test, the average score of postgraduate students (who participated) in China is lower than 60, indicating a ‘serious lack’ in the capabilities for critical thinking (p. 31). There are Chinese scholars conclude after a preliminary survey, that Chinese students’ score in such text is less than American postgraduate students, meaning Chinese students have a ‘negative’ tendency in thinking critically (Luo & Yang, 2001, p.50). Liu (2001) claims that to some extent Chinese students may be described as ‘有知识没思想，有智商没智慧 (having knowledge yet no thinking; having intelligence yet no wisdom)’ (p. 10).

With this recognition in mind, Chinese educators are devoted to learn how to derive the advanced experience of Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking in order to train Chinese students. For instance, Liu (2012) points to the urgency of developing Chinese students’ capabilities for Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking in coping with the internationalisation which is facilitated by the global language, English. It is argued that through mastering Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking, Chinese students may be transmitted to becoming more capable in the field of academic research and practical professionals (Dai & Wang, 2006).

In contrast, Vaidya’s (2017) presentation of critical thinking considers that it originates from the human condition, as opposed to biased claims that it is exclusively associated with Western Anglophone features. O’Sullivan and Guo’s (2011) research into the critical thinking and Chinese international students shows the limitations of Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking in English through identifying the non-Western that it excludes. Likewise, Durkin’s (2008) research into East Asian master's students’ perceptions of critical argumentation in UK universities, leads to the observation that critical thinking as developed by “White Westerners” [in the UK is] “biased because it excludes the practices of some groups” (p.45). Singh (2017) explicitly argues that using multiple languages and theoretical recourses to develop students’ capabilities for critical thinking may offer an educationally responsible way forward.

Sadly, in a certain body of literature, the construction of Chinese students’ as
uncritical is a shared understanding in Chinese and Western Anglophone higher education context. Such acknowledgement appears not to be a particular concern in Western, Anglophone universities. However, the insularity of Western Anglophone’s scholarly endeavours with respect to critical thinking poses particular challenges for international students from China, especially in the aspect of business of international education, and the problematised assessment practices.

2.3 The business of international education

In his introduction to the 2015 Draft National Strategy on International Education, then Minister of Education and Training Christopher Pyne stated that one of the most significant values of international education for Australia is to drive economic growth:

International education is vital for the Australian economy. It is our largest services export, contributing $16.3 billion to the Australian economy in 2013-14….International students studying in Australia, together with visiting family and friends, also make a significant contribution to Australia’s tourism industry, supporting even more jobs across our services sector (p.5).

Again in his final version of National Strategy for International Education 2025, Pyne (2016) stressed:

Recognised as one of the five super growth sectors contributing to Australia’s transition from a resources-based to a modern services economy, international education offers an unprecedented opportunity for Australia to capitalise on increasing global demand for education services (p. v).

Vongalis-Macrow (2014) indicates that from an economic perspective, Chinese students can be seen as integral to export-led education, defined as ‘moving goods and services outward’ (p. 4). That is to say, economic factors relating to the recruitment of Chinese students will tend to temper or counterbalance the education concerns raised above. The growing international Chinese student market has strengthened the role of for-profit universities and other providers (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Clark (1998) points to opportunities being sought by universities for the commercial delivery of educational programs in English and critical thinking (p. 3).
Naturally there are costs as well as benefits, and Tilak (2008) notes that university education is ‘subject to severe pressures from domestic and international markets’ (p. 450). The recruitment of Chinese international students has the features of a commercial activity.

This however is not to say that such recruitment and educational delivery have become purely commercial. Marginson (2009) maintains that education exporting countries such as Australia, have not ‘relinquished [their] educational mission or the commitment to scholarship and research that is integral to universities’ (p. 11). Responding to criticisms that education has become a tradable commodity, universities use ‘quality assurance’ (Harmon, 2006, p. 15). Even more in the spirit of intercultural co-operation, there is research acknowledging that Chinese students have a cross-language capability and so can generate novel modes of critique from the intercultural conceptual tools available to them (Singh & Han, 2010; Singh, 2013). Such research goes as far to suggest that universities might recruit Chinese students for reciprocal learning opportunities and intellectual exchange.

Nevertheless, scholarly debate continues over the potential tension between educational values such as critical thinking and the international business of marketing English. Kim (2011) acknowledges that most Asian students travel to Anglophone countries with their production and consumption of academic capital, in a uni-directional global flow of international students, language and knowledge. The business of international education necessarily privileges marketable products, prominent among them monolingual English literacy and Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking.

2.4 Problematising assessment practices

Section 2.2 above focuses on a deficit view of Chinese students that holds that their background virtually condemns them to failure in critical thinking. Yet success or failure in critical thinking depends on a process of assessment of their performance by various means, and this section according examines assessment practices. There is
an assumption by Anglophone educators that ‘the concept and practice of critical thinking has been mastered by their students, including international students,’ and therefore students should develop ‘good critical thinking skills’ assessable in terms of their expected professional demands (O’Sullivan & Guo, 2010, p. 54). Shohamy (2011) points out however that although international students from China acquire vast amounts of academic knowledge, it is not always possible to access that knowledge through tests conducted in a different language (p. 419). Thus Ku (2009) is concerned that critical thinking tests using a single multiple-choice response format measure only response to certain types of knowledge without appreciation of an international student’s personal dispositional approach to reasoning (p. 70).

Research argues that tests used in Anglophone universities, which evaluate critical thinking from an English-only monolingual perspective, mask the actual level of students’ academic achievement so that valid assessment is compromised (Shohamy, 2011). Lack of familiarity with a topic will also tend to adversely affect students’ level of critical thinking, even with English speaking students (Tian & Low, 2011). Ryan and Viete (2009) argue that the requirement for Chinese students to use only academic English at an advanced level in their university studies disadvantages them in their assessment outcomes and affects their critical performance (p. 303). Zhang (2011) reports the educators in Anglophone universities try to elevate the level of academic discourse for Chinese students, but often invest less effort to show students how to deconstruct language to produce simple, clear statements. In her study, one student stated in interview that:

I can only illustrate my ideas in plain sentences … but the professors, they just changed the whole structure to make it prettier … they always … make the sentences more complicated or more professional. but I lack the ability to do that. (p. 46).

Zhang (2011) worries that the result of this pedagogical approach is that the students tend to be bound by the complex academic formulae they read, but often produce undigested chains of big words--often not making sense.

Stubborn adherence to an English-only pedagogy ignores the plain fact that students who are speakers of another language will understand new information more easily when it is presented in their own language. Yet the dominance of English, however
problematic it may be as far as assessment is concerned, is unchallenged in the Anglophone culture. Swain et al. (2011) detect a sense of guilt by teachers of English classes in Hong Kong ‘every time they use Cantonese in their classes,’ because they are urged to use English ‘in all English lessons and beyond;’ schools have warned teachers, particularly teachers-in-training, that ‘Cantonese must not be used in English classes’ (p. 2). Such an English-only rule is pervasive. Singh and Shrestha (2008) observe that as they confront assessment criteria privileging English and Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking, Chinese students ‘have to admit to the inappropriateness of the culturally ingrained strategies they have learned for composing essays’ (p. 67).

The dominance of English and associated assessment in Anglophone universities may neglect these students’ existing experience of language and critical practice. Clifford and Montgomery (2014) see persistent claims of absolute ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers in terms what is expected in Western disciplines, and contrast this approach with a non-Western educational view that such issues need to be resolved through an analytic process that explicitly traces the influence of English and its associated critical resources and modes of thinking (p. 37).

Thus there is reason to say that assessments of Chinese international students’ critical thinking may be unfair, because the means used to gather evidence and assess their performance are inadequate or invalid. To take this line of thinking further, whatever role students’ prior education in China may have had in relation to any limited capabilities for critical thinking, their education in the West his research may well have a limiting effect. A critique applied to Chinese pedagogy may then be equally applied to Western pedagogy.

2.5 Chinese modes of critical thinking

Traditional Chinese critical practices are not ‘a conceptualized category or an abstract notion’ but ‘a mass of critical knowledge accumulated over hundreds of years and made available as a collective formation’ (Tong & Zhou, 2002, p.159). Chinese thought was expressed in a vast range of critical literature within an
intellectual tradition that covered Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist thought by turns (Huang, 2013). Over a century before the French Revolution and the US Declaration of Independence, China was ruled from 1368 to 1644 by the Ming dynasty, described as ‘one of the greatest eras of orderly government and social stability in human history.’ (Reischauer, Fairbank & Craig, cited in Fan, 2016, p. 97). Coming to the 19th century, through the turmoil of political change China faced a now sophisticated Western intellectual and scientific tradition and, largely successfully, adapted its language and academic structures to the new challenges (Fan, 2016).

Critical thinking, although not specifically defined in such term, is valued and encouraged by Chinese traditional scholarship and thinking. For instance, Liu (1996) contends that despite the Confucian cultural oriented educational was criticized as a main restraint on Chinese students’ critical thinking, Confucius himself engaged with critical thinkers who disputed his claims to argue for the acceptance of his ideas. Confucius was aware of the significance of critical thinking. Such awareness is especially clear in his advocacy of the need for reflection in critical learning:

温故而知新 5 wēn gù er zhī xīn (source: 论语·为政 Lúnyǔ·wéizhèng).

The statement has a general meaning: Getting to the unknown through the known. However, it can be interpreted more specifically through four different perspectives.

(1) to reflect on the knowledge which has already obtained and develop new understanding of this knowledge;

(2) (studying contains) reflecting on the old knowledge as well as new knowledge;

(3) One person’s understanding would develop with experiences. Reflecting on and examine the old knowledge with such developed understanding, the

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4 There are statements from Western as well as Chinese sources that testify to the profound values of Chinese scholarship and thinking, from Confucius and Laozi onward and including figures such as Sima Qian (司马迁), Zhu Xi (朱熹) and so on. However, to serve the purpose this study, here I specifically note the Chinese scholarship and thinking that encourage critical thinking in learning and teaching.

5 温 (wen): to reflect on; 故 (gu): the old; 而 (er): and; 知 (zhi): know; 新 (xin): the new.
person can have new perceptions. Compare to (1), this type of reflection requires more time and experiences.

(4) To reflect on the history and learn lesson from it; in doing so, to anticipate alternative for problems encountered in present and future.

Kim (2003) holds that Confucius’s encouragement on reflection presupposes and reinforces critical thinking, through examine ‘underlying principles, being open minded in listening and considering the view of others’, being ‘fair-minded in assessing evidence’, and ‘thinking autonomously in judging and assuming responsibility for one’s belief’ (p. 73).

Likewise, Peterson’s (1979) account of the scholarly arguments of Mencius demonstrates that China has an intellectual heritage of critical thinking. Mencius makes explicit that he does not approve of uncritically rely on knowledge for knowing:

尽信书不如无书  Jìn xìn shū bù rú wú shū (source: 孟子·尽心下 Mencius· Jin xīn xià).

In this statement, Mencius means ‘if I believed everything in the Book of History, it would be better for the Book not to have existed at all’ (cited in Peterson, 1979, p. 317). He encourages having a critical scepticism and inquiry to what is recorded as knowledge. It is important to draw on the existing knowledge framework, but Mencius discourages depending on them ‘in a literal way for knowing what he asserted (p. 317).

In the Song dynasty, Zhu Xi (cited in Wang, 2009) advanced the understanding the critical concept of: 格物致知 (gé wù zhì zhī) to study the underlying principle to acquire knowledge; pursuing knowledge to the end). In Zhu Xi’s philosophical perspective, 格物 (gé wù) means to engage with a certain kind of critical inquiry or investigation so as to understand the principles and logic of nature through books and real-context affairs (Han, 2003). As a result of 格物 (gé wù), knowledge can be

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6 The critical concept of 格物致知 (gé wù zhì zhī) is first recorded in 礼记·大学 (lǐ jì dà·xué) in Han Dynasty, and remains to be one of the most debatable concept in Confucian school. The contemporary understanding of this concept largely bases on Zhu Xi’s philosophical interpretation.
acquired and extended, that is, 致知 (zhì zhī). Yet the ‘ever open-ended possibilities of principle and logic’ determine the ‘purist to knowledge to be an endless journey’ (Han, 2003, p. 53). Shen (2012) argues Zhu Xi’s doctrine of 格物致知 (gé wù zhì zhī) presuppose his perception of ‘critical mental capacity or competence’, a capacity needed to be highlighted and developed through intellectual (p. 69).

Strategies of critical thinking continue to be developed through pedagogical approaches produced by Chinese scholars. Tao Xingzhi (cited in Meng, 2012) claims that in education ‘教与学都以做为中心 doing is the centre for teaching and learning’ (p. 235). For him, a practice-based learning approach is the key approach to knowledge:

"做是发明, 是创造, 是实验, 是建设, 是生产, 是破坏, 是奋斗, is探寻出路。"

Dong is to invent, to create, to experiment, to build, to produce, to break, to fight and to explore. (Meng, 2012, p. 235).

Price (2014) argues such clarion call of Tao Xingzhi aims to stop the ‘dry tests’, and ‘in their place, develop for students the creative test’ (p. 8). His critical method would still be valuable to assist students nowadays to evaluate the ‘nature of life, not dry knowledge from the textbook’ (p. 8).

Following the May Fourth movement (lasting for about three years after 1919), advocating Western ways of reasoning, sense making and scientific thinking was considered in terms of creating a new critical subject to address reform and modernisation of China (Tong & Zhou, 2002). Davies (2007) observes after May Fourth movement and before 1990s, Chinese critical inquiry is ‘largely oriented toward detecting merits and flaws within the national culture’ on the assumption that

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7 Tao Xingzhi was influenced by both the education theory of Dewey and of Wang Yangming. Considering the Chinese condition in the 1920s, Tao practiced Dewey’s and Wang’s theories creatively. Dewey thought “Education is life” while Tao argued that ‘Life is education’; Wang said ‘Knowledge-action’ (Zhi-Xing) while Tao thought “Action-knowledge” (Xing-Zhi).

the intellectual, as ‘producer of sixiang思想 (thought) and xueshu学术 (knowledge)’, needs to take responsibility for judging ‘how the quality of Chinese culture and “the people” should be improved’ (p. 17). When the value of Western theory is translated, transmitted within Sinophobe discourse, the relationship between Sinophobe and Anglophone becomes an interesting and problematized relationship that is productive of ramifications much further afield than mere academic exchange (Davies, 2007, p. 8). To what extent should Chinese traditional knowledge heritage appropriate and interact with Western theories remains a focus in intellectual field. Contemporary Chinese culture studies and political, social and economic thought re-examine the Western model of modernity from a critical point of view and propose a ‘new postcolonial, postmodern form of modernisation’ with Chinese characteristics (Golden, 2006, p. 7).

A more recent task for modern Chinese critical thinking practices, in Tong and Zhou’s (2002) words, is to ‘democratise taste and emancipate literary experience from the socially privileged’ for the common people (p. 165). Bergsten et al. (2008) argue that at this new stage critical practices in China called for a new ‘emancipation of the mind’, which encourages people to ‘break the old rules’ and discard ‘practices and systems that are out of keeping with the scientific development concepts’ (p. 42).

There is evidence of Chinese intellectuals engaging in critical thinking in contemporary society, at home and abroad, including in novels and memoirs translated into English (Gao, 2000; Guo, 2010; Guo, 2007; Xin, 2007). Graham (1986) explains that one approach is to conceive critical thinking in Chinese ‘as dialectic, a debate between two parties’ in language-specific ways (p.103).

Yet these demonstrations of recognition, encouragement, as well as the development and practices of critical thinking in Chinese scholarship and thinking attract little attention of Western scholars. Huang (2011) indicates it is unfortunate that Western intellectuals spent the last couple of hundred years into realisation that they know little about the in-depth Chinese edifice of critical literary and philosophic thought. However, fortunately, research increasingly calls for an authentic and synthesized exploration of Chinese and Western traditions in terms of their intercultural complementarities (Salter, 2014; Huang, 2011; Weinmann, 2015). Meanwhile, recent
studies has been advocated to introducing the value of Chinese modes of critical thinking to Western academic (Singh, 2009; Singh & Han, 2010; Meng, 2012; Qi, 2015).

The following sections reviewed concerns accounts of features of Chinese modes of critical thinking, and the critical thinking students engaged in their writings.

2.5.1 Oblique and alternative critical thinking

Davies (2007) argues that ‘systematic political pressure’ has produced the ‘pervasive practice of self-censorship among Chinese intellectuals’ (p. 4). Intellectuals in China are familiar with what critical thinking could bring them, as history has taught them abundant lessons on this matter through violent censorship (Berry, 2011). Accordingly, Davies (2007) notes how Chinese scholars use critical inquiry ‘to detect where the border between safety and punishment is at any given moment’ (p. 4). They spend time trying to find a balance between what they need to say and what they can say: ‘state censorship and an abiding sense of cultural subjugation impose powerful limitations on mainland Sinophone scholarship’ (Davies, 2007, p. 35). Davies argues that censorship and a ban on plain speech have resulted in cautious promotion of intellectual autonomy by most Chinese scholars in one other theoretical idiom, on the assumption that informed readers will nonetheless interpret their intention as tacit criticism. She is saying in effect that a key feature of critical thinking in China can be the oblique nature of a critical message from the writer to the readers. Yet this feature can also be a major obstacle for Anglophone audience to understand Chinese mode of critical thinking.

The traditional demands of Confucian culture are another aspect of critical thinking in practice in China. Confucian values of balance, stability and harmony are used in China to justify ‘respect in speech’ in terms of a moral sense, which in Hostettler’s (2009) view means that ‘an individual’s freedom of expression is secondary to the shared rights of society’ (p. 72). Allowing individuals to air their critical thinking freely to confront the injustices of society can do serious harm to the harmony and productivity of the society, especially when it causes problems for elites. Therefore, it is naturally expected that ‘the rights of speaker must be taken into consideration in
conjunction with the rights of the listeners’ (Hostettler, 2009, pp.72-73). According to this view, the demand of a culture that endorses harmony makes critical thinking a challenge to a social ethic.

Yet there are various ways that people in China may strive to think critically and maintain a personal resistance, and popular education has meant that critical enquiry is no longer confined to a learned elite (Tong & Zhou, 2002). Research has increasingly focused on creative ways to express critical views in society: Bridges (2007) speaks of a public ‘community of arguers, enquirers and critics’ who comprise a present-day intellectual Chinese heritage (p. 66). Even the abundance of homophones in the Chinese language provides opportunities for critical expression (Singh, 2009): for instance, Wang (2011) reports that university students playfully write ‘因材施教 yin cai shi jiao8 - teaching according to aptitude’ as ‘因财施教 yin cai shi jiao - teaching according to money,’ implying a frustrated criticism of commercialised society. Two distinct meanings of the same Chinese character can also be deliberately used to have two distinct meanings: Wang (2009) shows how an intellectual cryptically quoted a couplet: 生如夏花, 却被折下 shēng rú xihuā, què què zhé xià, ‘Life is as summer flowers, but it is snapped off.’ But 生 shēng can also mean ‘student,’ and in the context of this intellectual’s students’ experience in the Cultural Revolution, the quotation will be interpreted as ‘The students were as summer flowers, but they suffered from the disaster of that time.’

Indirect critical expression is also evident in news writing. A Chinese saying goes: 文责自负, 落字为据 Wén zé zì fù, luò zì wéi jù ‘Take responsibility for what you write and let the words be evidence;’ in the media press a strategy of 一死一活 yī sǐ yī huó, ‘rigid but flexible,’ that is rigidly researched but flexibly expressed, in a situation where someone making critical comment needs to be aware of the political risk. A strategy for critical news reporting cited by Zhang (2011) for critique in news

8 If the tones were not indicated in the original literature, the quotations do not indicate the tones. However, the pinyin specified by this study itself were indicated with tones.
reporting is 头脑可热, 下笔要冷, tóu nǎo kē rè, xià bǐ yào lěng ‘be hot-headed but keep your pen cool;’ use descriptive rather than antagonistic language (p. 32).

2.5.2 Chinese students’ critical writing

Critical writing tends to be influenced by first language cultural background, perceptions of narrative structure and rhetorical characteristics (Liu, 2007). Western scholars consider the ‘lack of formulated grammatical rules in Chinese writing’ can imply ‘the absence of a more significant aspect in the Chinese way of thinking’ (Tong & Zhou, 2002, p. 166). Zhao and McDougall (2008) report adoption by Chinese students of ‘an indirect or circular pattern of expression which is not favoured in Western rhetoric,’ and culture-specific metaphors ‘not readily used as cultural convention among English speakers’ (p. 65). Liu (2007) holds Chinese students tend to use fewer ‘openly introspective or reflexive passages and use more dramatically narrative messages’ (p. 123). That is to say, to concentrate less on reflection than Western students do, but rely more on assertion. In quoting Kaplan’s (1966) description of Asian languages as ‘circles or gyres [that] turn around the subject and show it from a variety of tangential views, but [where] the subject is never looked at directly’ (cited in Liu, 2007, p. 127), Liu (2007) no doubt indicates an awareness among Chinese students of traditional forms of strategic argumentation. Yet although Liu’s point is well made, in the absence of sophisticated rhetorical language skills, strategies like these will not be understood in a Western context and will fail, just as the use of (mostly poorly translated) culture-specific chéngyǔ 成语 ‘traditional sayings’ is likely to fail. Mu and Carrington (2007) discuss the use of implicit, hánxǔ 含蓄 language (implicature) and mài fù 埋伏, ‘lurking in ambush,’ a kind of argumentative placement of prior latent clues (p. 6). To transpose such Chinese rhetorical devices into English would require an extremely high level of writing skill, and in any case students need to understand the difference between adapting their thinking methods to Western modes of expression on the one hand and on the other, writing English words in a Chinese ‘home heritage’ template which will not be understood. Zhao and McDougall (2008) note that the use of Chinese
rhetorical methods are criticised for their ‘lack of unity and coherence’ in Western terms (p. 65); yet it must be asked: are not students producing such text merely reproducing the surface characteristics of certain rhetorical styles rather than embodying their underlying rhetorical function? And are they ignoring the audience to whom they should be writing? Are they tending to cling to features of their own Chinese literary landscape and hoping to maintain or re-invent them in an international context?

You (2008) puts forward a proposition that an alternative model focusing on individual negotiation of critical thinking issues might be more successful than a choice between irreconcilable Chinese and English rhetorical strategies as they present themselves to Chinese students (p. 234). Such a model could respond to political and socio-ethical pressures and invite readers to realise the key argument for themselves, rather than plainly and explicitly making the point. Yet such a strategy in assignments to their Western lecturers, compounded by inadequate written English and participation in tutorial classes, has led to a conclusion that Chinese international students generally lack a capability for critical thinking. In an interview conducted by Trahar (2009), the Chinese participant repeatedly hid his personal self by saying, for example, ‘some think’ rather than ‘I’ think. He also shifted focus when providing answers that he found sensitive. This is a Chinese mode of critical thinking as ‘婉转’ (wǎn zhuǎn, indirect expression). The interviewed Chinese student employed this strategy to perform his critical comment, while avoiding confrontation in conversation. An indirect approach may be common enough in English, but its expression is different.

2.6 Problematising Western appropriations of critical thinking

The last section discussed restrictions on outspoken expression of opinion on sensitive subjects as a major constraint in relation to critical thinking in China. However, restraints on critical thinking are not only a problem in China but something that may be experienced by nations generally. This section provides a brief overview of Western appropriation of critical thinking, where academic
acceptance of student research is withheld because of certain culturally defined US
tenets (Urrieta, 2005; Hostettler, 2009), and standards of expression in testing the
English of foreign students have been shown to involve cultural norms (O’Reilly,
Ryan & Hickey, 2010).

Further, despite the claim that right to freedom of expression is integral to
Anglophone intellectual culture people are prohibited from questioning Anglophone
government policies and operations. For example, the Australian Border Force Act
came into effect in mid-2015. This legislation means an “entrusted person” who
works, or has worked, in Australia’s immigration system will be committing an
offence if he or she discloses information about conditions in refugee detention
centres without the government’s consent (AAP, 2015a). A breach of this Act can
result in two years in jail (AAP, 2015a). Medical professionals understand that this
government legislation “prevents any health workers who are working in detention
centres from carrying out their normal professional activities, such as collecting data
and presenting it at academic and professional forums - it criminalises it” (AAP,
2015b, n.p.). Such Anglophone government legislation deliberately suppresses the
activation and mobilisation of their critical thinking by citizens, students and
professionals. While this government power to control critical thinking meets
resistance, such opposition to political censorship is constrained. Of course, that
people resist efforts to prohibit them from doing so indicates that they can think
critically.

It is true that political issues have affected China’s intellectual climate up to the
present. Did not this happen under Fascism in Europe and Communism in Russia?
The problem in assessing critical thinking is twofold: One, it is hardly likely that
there is any genetic basis for any conceivable lack of ability to think critically; Two,
Essentially, as this thesis argues, there are mismatches and elements of
misunderstanding at the interface of Chinese and Western culture (Davies, 2007).
2.7 Transforming Intellectual diversity

Another body of research literature reviewed has concerned issues of transforming intellectual diversity in Western Anglophone education. More specifically, this research focuses on issues about opening paths for capabilities of students from China for critical thinking by introducing Chinese critical resources as theoretical tool in their research in Australia. For instance, As a direct pedagogical approach, the University of Sydney opened access to CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure, 中国知网) for institutions hosting international students from China, on the anticipation of that input of knowledge is far more efficient when it is in the student’s native language; as well because of the expectation of that ideally students should have abundant access to general reading in Chinese.³

International students from China are considered as bilinguals ¹⁰, or even multilingual who can speak Chinese, English and/or one or more dialect(s) in this study. Yet the use of the term multilingual is a general term covering worldwide students’ potential in generating modes of critical thinking from the conceptual tools available to them in their own intellectual culture as well as the target language and culture of their studies (Singh & Han, 2010). These students from China need initial support, at the same time as their foundation studies in English, to engage with their home heritage of critical thinking and resources to enable ‘unprompted thinking,’ that is creative thinking that derives from an independent sense of reasoning for themselves (Ku, 2009, p. 97). This is far more than a process of knowledge transfer for a limited time in a limited space: Weinmann (2015) argues that education will have to struggle to act as ‘a transformative conduit negotiating national and global imaginaries’, since ‘the world it seeks to represent has moved beyond traditional boundaries of language, society and cultural to a shared space’ (p. 189). Dervin (2011) sees helping other students from other cultures to ‘preserve the home culture’

³ Refer to usyd.edu.au database.
¹⁰ Although the word bilingual is often regarded as an exaggeration. Because true bilingualism, implying approximately equal facility in two languages, is extremely rare. A concept of ‘cross-language ability’ would be an accurate description of Chinese students’ language side of intercultural creativity.
and actively involved with the host culture’ in Western universities as a reification of intercultural relations (p. 39).

To take a case study at Western Sydney University where students from China are involved in a program of research-oriented teacher education, the high level of intercultural hospitality and cross-language interchange in this educational encounter provides reciprocal opportunities for intellectual exchange (Singh, 2013). As these students from China research Australian educational issues and practices, they are encouraged to find ways of expressing Chinese concepts, metaphors and images in English as meaningful tools in dialogues that go far more deep than mere surface exchange of verbal equivalents (Singh & Meng, 2012, p.915). For example, Qi (2015) introduced a concept of ‘networked-hutong siwei (胡同思维11)’ to ‘encompass ways of thinking that underpin educational actors’ critiques and actions in unpromising environment’ (p. 38). With a ‘networked-hutong siwei (胡同思维)’, she anticipates educational actors, especially in a culturally divergent academic environment, to coordinate their actions by negotiating their critical interpretations, so as to diversify their critical agency, and in turn, to recognise, mobilise and engage their students’ critiques. Such cross-language intercultural reconstitution of critical thinking in education is able to create a multi-modal contact zone that draws upon multiple evolving assets of China as well as the Western world. The active mobilisation of ‘critical, collaborative, reciprocal interactions around multiple sources of critical theorising’ is a pedagogical intervention that facilitates the co-production of Australian-Chinese modes of critical thinking. (Singh, 2013, pp. 158, 160).

2.8 Shifting the Frame: ‘Chinese students’ to ‘multilingual students’

A school of literature describes international students from China as lacking capabilities for thinking critically. However, there is another body of literature that challenges this deficit view of these students by posing the problems faced by Anglophone universities, for instance, the English-only assessment. Importantly,

11胡同 hutong(s) are narrow back alley in residential communities of northern China’s mage cities. Normally hutong(s) connect to each other and extend to all directions.
scholars revealed selected modes of critical thinking in Chinese, and reported on students’ creative ways to employ such modes of Chinese modes of critical thinking in Anglophone academic context. The gap and possibilities exhibited in these different sets of literature warrant the exploration of the potential these students’ linguistic repertoire offers for them to access modes of critical thinking in Chinese which they might learn to deploy in academic English.

This thesis takes a standpoint which argues for a substantial conceptual shift that moves beyond the ethno-national construction of ‘Chinese students’ to focus on their capabilities for engaging critical thinking using their full linguistic repertoire. In constructing the category of the ‘Chinese students’, literature connotes the ethnic label of its majority group members to a designated group. The label of ‘Chinese students’ implies the inability to think critically is because they are from the nation-state of China. The taken for granted labelling of these students in this way imposes limits on the evaluation of their capabilities and the pedagogies employed to engage them educationally in thinking critically (Singh, et al., 2015).

By being labelled as ‘Chinese students’, these students are rejected and excluded by the critical community which engages Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking. As ‘Chinese students’, they lack relevant knowledge and language proficiency. Accordantly, these students face difficult demands on their thinking as they attempt to adjust to a different world view in a second language where assumptions and methodology differ and what they have learned over years in China is regarded as virtually non-existent.

However, Singh (2017) reasons that instead of using a single label to categorize out-groups and their differential positioning within a given hierarchy, the use of multip labels elicits more favorable approaches and more positive evaluations of their capabilities. Specifically, Anglophone educators may form a different impression of these students by acknowledging them as ‘multilingual students’ from China, as they speak English, Chinese, and perhaps one or more dialects or other languages. The context of these students’ critical thinking involves the capabilities they possess, and the ways in which they demonstrate how critically they think. Therefore, recognizing students from China as being speakers of multiple languages means acknowledging
that they have linguistic repertoires that could potentially provide them with various Chinese modes of critical thinking.

In making such a shift from seeing ‘Chinese students’ to seeing ‘multilingual students’ from China, a novel framework for proposing educational engagement with these students’ capabilities for critical thinking might be framed. In terms of education and research, there may be more to be gained educationally by publically representing these students as speakers of multiple languages, rather than labeling them ‘Chinese students’ to identify them with a particular nation-state.

2.9 Conclusion to Chapter Two

This chapter began by noting a ‘deficit view’ that Chinese students lack a capability for critical thinking because of their educational background, so that they need to be taught Western skills of critical thinking (Egege & Kutieleh, 2004; Asmar, 2005; Clark & Gieve, 2006). However another angle to this ‘deficit view’ situates Chinese students in the marketing of a privileged Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking (Vongalis-Macrow, 2014; Altbach & Knight, 2007). This chapter has raised doubts over whether the ability of Chinese international students to engage in critical thinking, and their actual record of critical thinking, can be assessed in terms of their ability in English and the application of criteria that is specifically design to measure Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking (Shohamy, 2011; Ryan & Viete, 2009). These concerns are taken up in Chapters Three and Six.

This Literature Review has also noted various Chinese modes of critical thinking that differ from Anglophone models (Davies, 2007; Berry, 2011; Mu & Carrington, 2007). However, when problems arise with the practice of critical performance in Anglophone universities, these 'home heritage' modes of critical thinking readily tend to be submerged within a prevailing 'deficit' prejudice. Emphasising the need to see the picture from both sides increases attention to be paid to investigating ways to transform these students’ critical capabilities and show them the critical resources available to them (Singh & Meng; Singh & Chen).
Above all this chapter has suggested on a conceptual shift from the stereotypic view of Chinese students as uncritical and disengaged, to a new frame of multilingual students who can use their full linguistic repertoire to express their critical thinking. In doing so the Anglophone universities can move beyond the limitation of labelling ‘Chinese student’ as critically handicapped to an alternative frame in which these students may be critically equally intelligent when they are provided the opportunities to employ their multilingual capabilities. This particular proposition would be investigated further in this study.
CHAPTER THREE
INTELLECTUAL INEQUALITY AND EQUALITY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a theoretical framework to examine Chinese modes of critical thinking and the capabilities of students from China for engaging in critical thinking as they learn and carry out research. Chapter Two identifies a deficit view existing in the literature to the effect that ‘Chinese students’ inherently lack a critical thinking capability. That chapter begins to move on from there, through critical analysis of problems they face in Western academia, to a positive view of their potential in creative and critical thought. The present chapter sets out a number of conceptual constructs to challenge a view that Chinese students are necessarily caught in a static and unproductive state where they are bound not to advance to their full potential in Anglophone universities. The present chapter begins with the concept of emancipation (Fay, 1975; 1987; Rancière, 2009). The problematic pedagogical approaches of English-speaking western universities discussed in the last chapter are underpinned by Rancière’s (1991) critical argument of intellectual inequality, and Jullien’s (2014) elaboration on uniformization. Following this thread, Rancière’s (1991) assertion of intellectual equality emerges as a conceptual category for the organisation of data collection and analysis in this research project. This chapter takes an inductive rather than deductive approach by first explaining and elaborating the relevant concepts and only then discussing verification of intellectual equality. The dynamic of interactions between concepts is illustrated in Figure 3.1.

12 It is worth noting that quotations from the works of Jacques Rancière, Pierre Bourdieu, Luc Boltanski and François Jullien are from English translations of the original French text.
3.1 Emancipation

The term *enlightenment* can be seen as achieving a state ‘free from prejudice or constrained ways of thinking and acting’ (MacLeod & Zimmer, 2005, p. 71). Through *enlightenment*, critical actors are empowered with ways to galvanise ‘socially transformative actions’ to ‘change their oppressed condition’ (Qi, 2015, p. 40). Through *empowerment*, popular struggle is enabled against injustice (Neocosmos, 2006, p. 358). After *enlightenment* and *empowerment*, critical theory identifies *emancipation* as a stage of personal liberation (Fay, 1975). *Emancipation* is then ‘the keystone of a commitment to transformative change in world’ (People, 2011, p. 1113). It includes actions and reflections that liberate critical actors from social or political restraint, or from oppression (MacLeod & Zimmer, 2005). Critical *emancipation* is argued to empower critical actors in varied life contexts, redistributing ‘opportunities on a collective level, renewing the social, democratic and cultural goals’ (Wildemeersch & Salling Olesen, 2012, p. 98).
Emancipation is a process by which individuals or groups recognise ‘restrictive modes of thinking and acting, and thereby initiate the discovery of new ways of interpreting and inhabiting their worlds’ (McCabe & Holmes, 2009, p. 1520). Thus critical actors see local activities and educational, religious and cultural institutions anew. They critically examine dominating ‘truths’ and negotiate new modes of thinking and acting. Aiming for self-liberation and reclamation of independence, seekers of emancipation aim to ‘control their own lives’ in ‘a justice-oriented community’ (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2010, p. 143). Emancipated critical actors have become aware of the social constraints on their thinking and are open to new possibilities of being and doing in their lives, in their studies and in the workplace.

In critical social science, education is a basis for emancipation, dedicated to raising students’ level of consciousness, allowing them to ‘adopt a new conception of who they are and what they are doing’ (Fay, 1987, p. 151). Rather than determining how students blend into a social-educational context, education should help students to form a ‘new understanding of themselves,’ to explore ways to free themselves from ‘the forces which have oppressed them and caused them to live thwarted lives’ (p. 151). Emancipatory education aims show students their potential for reflective clarification of ‘which of their wants are genuine because they know finally who they really are,’ establishing collective antinomy—a paradox of tied freedom—where they have ‘the power to determine rationally and freely the nature and direction of their collective existence’ (Fay, 1987, p. 205). The way in which critical educators can help students acquire self-emancipatory practices may be illustrated by the Chinese precept 授人以渔，不如授之以渔, shòu rén yǐ yú, bù rú shòu zhī yǐ yú, ‘instead of giving people fish, teach them to fish’ (Qi, 2015, p. 5). The implication is thereby ‘give someone a fish and you feed him or her for a day; teach someone to fish and you feed him or her for a lifetime’ (p. 5).

Yet in a self-assured Western postmodern era the concept of critical emancipation can mean ‘relegating the other to a familiar, subordinate identity’ (Hobson, 2007, p. 91; italics added). In doing so, a non-Western agents are rendered is ‘a mute, passive reflection of the West’ (Ling, cited in Hobson, 2007, p. 100), robbed of ‘the agential capacity to resist the West,’ so that ‘the possibility of emancipatory change’ is
eradicated (Krishna, cited in Hobson, 2007, p. 100). The emancipatory process, furthermore, may not always work toward true critical emancipation from dominant ways of thinking and acting (Rancière, 2009).

Thus *emancipation* is not an end of a critical quest but a complex continuing process which does not necessarily mean that ‘we finally see the truth or gain access to true morality’ (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2010, p. 143).

### 3.1.1 Illusion of image

The *illusion of image* refers to the deceptive messages delivered by class domination, as it aims to hide the ‘violence of the domination concealed beneath the appearance of quotidian ordinariness and democratic peace’ (Rancière, 2009, p. 27). Rancière (2009) relates how spectators are tricked by the image produced by the dominant group in their interest, with a diminished capability to distinguish between image and reality. The image deludes ‘the poor cretin of an individual consumer’, drowning him or her in a ‘flood of commodities’ and ‘false promises’ (p. 46). In the most serious *illusion of image*, spectators incapable of critically reading the image and unmasking its deceptive message mistake the choices made *for* them as made *by* them. What they see as a process of *emancipation* imprisons them in self-deception, and the more they ‘imagine themselves capable of constructing their individual and collective lives differently, the more they sink into the servitude’ of the image (Rancière, 2009, pp. 44, 46).

Rancière (2009) sees critical emancipatory procedure as a ‘break with the ways of feeling, seeing and saying’ that have characterised subordinate identity in the old hierarchical order (p. 35). As participants in society exhibit signs of submission to the governance of commodity while claiming that these are conscious choices made of their own volition, they are expressing a denial of reality, and the price of unmasking that reality may be expenditure of effort and the loss of peace of mind. In the words of Curtis (2011), the problem with a false *emancipation* is rooted in ‘the belief that the image leads to something in excess of itself’ (p. 1105). True critical
emancipation distinguishes the image from the reality. It struggles against the *illusion of image* through uncovering the reality that spectators ‘do not know how to see…do not want to see’. Emancipation should make them ashamed of their denial, even if the image is presented as a ‘luxury commodity’ according to the logic of its own presentation (Rancière, 2009, pp. 29, 30). For critical actors who inhabit a reality where the dominant force promises them a model of liberation, emancipation means that they are led to ‘drawing differences’ to distinguish between the ‘model and the simulacra’ (Deleuze, 1983, p. 45).

In an era of widespread submission to commodity markets, education can be a vehicle for students to achieve *emancipation* from the *illusion of image* (Fay, 1987; Rancière, 2009), and the business of international education needs to be interrogated in terms of such a goal. A carefully contextualised *emancipation* can be ‘an orienting vector of educational practice and research’ (Radford, 2012, p. 101); critical educators should find ‘fertile ground’ to ‘give voice to those who have no voice,’ rejecting any implied appropriation of expert knowledge and assignation of positions\(^{13}\) (Huault & Perret, 2011, p. 281). This leads to the concept of *cultural capital*.

### 3.2 Cultural capital

*Cultural capital* is defined as ‘instruments for the appropriation of symbolic wealth socially designated as worthy of being sought and possessed’ (Bourdieu, 2003, p. 65), as embodied in ‘dominant cultural codes and practices’ (Aschaffenburg & Mass, 1997, p. 573). In their classroom observations, Gripsrud, Hovden and Moe (2011) found that students with cultural capital had ‘embodied skills, habits and attitudes which served them directly in their scholastic tasks and were central for their academic success’ (p. 508). Such students were also more likely to possess ‘a richer, more diverse cultural life and more extensive knowledge of every area of culture,’ while students excluded from *cultural capital* have less access to the dominant

\(^{13}\) This implies the overturning of *intellectual inequality*, which is elaborated in Sections 3.4 and 3.5.
culture and a lower propensity to acquire it (p. 508). Students are distinguished by the attained level of cultural capital. Thus cultural capital works to determine the hierarchical order, as well as to reinforce that order by unequally distributing access to the higher culture.

Although home influence is a key factor, the primary vehicle for the transmission of the ruling class culture is the educational system (Bourdieu, 1984). But cultural capital is a major obstacle for students from non-ruling class culture to access the mainstream culture. Devlin (2013) suggests that teachers and other staff—arguably representing the ruling class - ‘have the authority and the means to assess students and do so based on a set of assumptions, values and expectations that are not always made explicit’ (p. 940). Students who do not acquire the requisite cultural capital may encounter unfamiliarity with specific culture demands and difficulties in meeting them, while their peers, endowed with cultural capital in their lives, are less challenged. Teachers appear to communicate more easily with students who participate in dominant cultures, and perceive them as ‘more intellectually capable’ (p. 940). Cultural capital thus possesses a ‘symbolic power’ imposing a ‘vision of legitimate division’ where hierarchical order and seemingly unequal student intelligence exist because ‘properties attributed to agents present themselves in combinations that have very unequal probabilities’ (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 22).

Chapter Two has shown how evaluation of international students from various educational backgrounds favours English and its associated modes of critical thinking. Kim (2011) situates cultural capital in a global field, depicting international higher education (universities) as a means of achieving ‘global cultural capital.’ He shows how students consider speaking and thinking in English as a form of cultural capital, and see a degree from an Anglophone university as a sign of transmission to that culture (p. 111). The power of cultural capital has produced ‘increasing similarities in higher education around the globe’ (Findlay et al., 2012, p. 120). In this situation there is clearly a need to negotiate pedagogical alternatives to oppose the exclusive symbolic power of this phenomenon.
3.3 Boltanski’s sociology of critical practice

Guided by the theory of critical practice advanced by Luc Boltanski (2011), the present study aims to investigate critical practices by international students from China in Western universities, and to specify and ‘model’ a collective resource available to various parties to interpret the engagement of Chinese modes of critical thinking (p. 47). His concepts of institution and ordinary critique link closely with the line of research in this thesis (Boltanski, 2011, 2013).

3.3.1 Institution

Boltanski (2013) defines institution as a ‘bodiless being to which is delegated the task of stating the whatness of what is’ (p. 75). The institution creates ‘common constraints which shape the behaviour of the people involved,’ so as to exclude confrontation created by uncertainty (Boltanski & Thevenot, 1999, p. 366). The operation of the institution assumes the appropriateness of handling issues is established (Boltanski, 2011, p.75), along with the task of ‘maintaining in working order the current formats and rules’ (Boltanski, 2011, p. 50), as well as confirming of the ‘rules of acceptability’ (Boltanski & Thevenot, 1999, p. 360).

Institutions, seen in critical sociology as sources of instructional pressure, produce negative ‘symbolic violence’ that imply arbitrary acts in line with its rules of acceptability (Boltanski, 2011, p. 75). Yet at the same time they provide meaningful security: ‘human beings enjoy semantic security when their social identity and the social properties attached to it are maintained whatever the context in which they are plunged’ (Boltanski, 2013, p. 50). This implies that the institution expects from critical actors’ practices within its defined rules of appropriateness. As long as their practices are consistent with these rules, their security is assured.

But it cannot be assumed that institutions will remain stable. As the identity of individual, nation or society is constantly reshaped and refined, institutions are renewed and transformed accordingly. Critique draws new resources from the world,
‘questions this socially constructed reality’ and, when it is heeded, transforms existing institutions (Boltanski, 2011, p. 50).

Underpinning Boltanski’s (2011) argument is a postulate of ‘radical uncertainty’ - ‘the what is it of what is’ - an experiment in critical thought (p. 50). This compels raises the question of breaking down disciplinary surrounds of institutional pressure (p. 51). The next section takes up Chapter Two’s point that critical discussion of social issues is no longer the sole province of scholars but can be employed by ordinary people.

3.3.2 Ordinary critique

Boltanski defines ordinary people as follows:

The type of person who can judge unjust the way a certain test was performed in a certain situation, but due to lack of necessary tools to totalise, might take the institutionalised formats of tests as a whole, yet is still possibly be able to realise the institutionalised formats are stronger than they are as individuals, and hence understand the irrationality of demanding to make effectives changes on their own behalf (2011, p. 47).

To Boltanski, ordinary critique produced by ordinary people is typically seen in disputes which ‘denounce people, systems or events that are characterized as unjust by reference to particular situations or contexts’ (Boltanski, 2011, p. 6). Ordinary critique is implanted in society, contextually bound and generated from within; it is fragmented; its erratic critical intervention can fix on one specific aspect of educational relations (Boltanski, 2011).

Ordinary Chinese people, including students from China in Australia, rely upon their experience, showing their capacity to draw on arguments, disputes, and test formats that are currently based in reality, and then critique their theoretical and pedagogical resources before proposing their own solutions in due course. It follows that a deficit view of Chinese students’ lack of capability for critical thinking based on performance under academic conditions defined by Western universities—based on a
narrow slice of life - is not justified. The concept of intellectual inequality put forward by Rancière (1991) provides a further argument against the deficit view.

3.4 Intellectual inequality

Rancière (1991) sees traditional teaching as modelled on the giving of explanation (p. 87). This approach gives educators a status superior to their students, because the educators hold power over knowledge and are authorised to deliver knowledge as they see fit. Rancière (1991) questions the idea of directing students’ learning according to a belief in the ‘intellectual inferiority of students’—that students are not yet intellectually capable of learning by themselves without teachers’ explanation (p. 27).

Rancière (1991) opposes such an assumption of intellectual inequality, arguing that ‘what stultifies the common people is not the lack of instruction, but the belief in the inferiority of their intelligence’ (p. 39). Similarly, Citton (2010) contends that educators threaten a democratic process of critical thinking by standing within the model they are explaining to students and couching their explanation in the terms of the model itself (p. 29). To Rancière (1991), pedagogies of explanation on the basis of intellectual inequality ‘may be the path to learning,’ but it is ‘in no way a path to emancipation’ (p. 29). The problem is that the ‘emancipated remains dependent upon the truth or knowledge revealed…by the emancipator,’ trapped in the social arrangements created by the emancipator (Biesta, 2010, p. 40). Rancière holds that an ‘ignorant’ person should not be ‘defined as such by a mere lack of knowledge;’ this is ‘an oppressive structure that transforms a perfectly able intellectual agent into a powerless recipient’ (1991, cited in Citton, 2010, p. 30).

And noted in Chapter Two, opinion in Western universities tends to be that Chinese students are often unable to learn independently, and that this may be connected with a habit of reliance on instruction by their Chinese teachers. This implies the pedagogies based on intellectual inequality are central to the criticism of the ‘deficit’ educational system in China.
Ironically, according to literature set out in section 2.4, such pedagogies are shared by Western universities and educators as well. The problem with Western pedagogies for international students from China is that instead of coming to terms with different assumptions on life, society and educational philosophy, educators are basing their approach on an *intellectual inequality* and presuming that the deficits in the students’ critical capabilities need to be overcome by transmitting a new, superior knowledge to them (Clark & Gieve 2006; Tran 2013). These students’ knowledge of their mother tongue and their educational background in their own culture are treated as irrelevant or of little account. This transmission of new theoretical and linguistic knowledge amounts to a process of indoctrination, as it implies students cannot learn by themselves (Citton, 2010, p. 28). Such pedagogies tend not to result in enlightenment or engagement but rather tend to disable students’ critical exploration of new ways of learning. Models of teaching based on top-down explanation of critical thinking to students, in terms of the knowledge the educators themselves have gained, reinforce the *intellectual inequality* between themselves and their ‘uncritical’ students (Chambers, 2014). This pedagogy can be understood as a form of *uniformization*.

### 3.4.1 Uniformization

Jullien (2014) argues that uniformity ‘is only a sterile repetition’ of one culturally defined truth through reinforcing, prolonging and displaying its effects. His concept of *uniformization* is the production of ‘a standardisation of measures, codes and jurisdictions’ on a kind of ‘assembly line’ (p. 10). Its only merit is ‘to increase the yield and make everything easier’. Jullien’s (2014) concern is that this process produces a mere standardised façade of equality, especially in the domains of law and education (p. 11).

*Uniformization* has been criticised on various grounds. Its emphasis on a pure culture is likely to place boundaries around individual and cultural identity (Mihalcea
& Vițelar, 2015). It appears to pursue equality but has arguably increased ‘forms of ethnic absolutism, nationalism and even fundamentalism’ (Pereira-Ares, 2015, p. 468). Uniformization is even seen as a ‘unidirectional and unidimensional process, driven by the Western-dominated global market economy and tending to standardise’ (Georgiu, 2014, p. 21).

In non-Western cultures, uniformization tends to generate correlations and analogies with Western modes of educational policy and its trappings (Karras, 2014). It happens out of convenience, because applying a similar standard to everyone is easier than flexibly considering different possibilities in different contexts. Uniformization spreads globally through its seductive claims to progress, without ‘anything elsewhere able even slightly to contradict it, except on a residual basis’ (Jullien, 2014, pp. 13). Jullien (2014) asserts that the global construction of a Western-based uniformity in modes of critical thinking renders other modes of critical thinking ‘sterile, incapable of being mobilised’ (p. 163). An enforced closed identity and exclusive body of knowledge leave few spaces for international students from China outside the Western domain to express their multilingual and intercultural capabilities. A uniformed Western pedagogy of intellectual inequality denies Chinese international students the opportunity to invent linguistic-theoretical components, especially derived from their own cultural heritage, to inject into the totality of the scholastic milieu in which they function.

To interpret intercultural education ‘as an enterprise of promoting uniformization’ will imply achieving understanding aligned in one particular direction. From independent observation of uniformization in China, Jullien finds that a belief there in universal uniformity is accepted to the point where imposed European concepts compete with existing Chinese concepts: there is a choice between cultural dilemmas, rather than a challenge to understand and reconcile apparently contradictory issues. Thus Jullien (2014) finds a conviction among students from China that ‘their culture is incommunicable, that its mystery or its essence is impenetrable to foreigners.’ This natural but unproductive attitude tends to impede critical interaction with Western educators and peers (pp.163-168). Jullien’s view is particularly valuable as it is informed by extensive experience with Chinese students in and from China, as well as being outside an Anglophone perspective.
3.5 Intellectual equality

Bourdieu’s research tends to reinforce inequality by taking it as a pivotal point in his analysis (Pelletier, 2009, p. 137). Rancière (1991), with his assumption that ‘everyone is of equal intelligence’ (p. 110), holds that the concept of cultural capital cannot combat intellectual inequality in the classroom; the outcome is to strengthen hierarchical order. He contends such concept sets out a supposedly ‘rationalised’ order, which puts people in their ‘proper’ place; in other words, it is an explanation for inequality (Pelletier, 2009, p. 144). With cultural capital, Bourdieu rightfully reminds us of the difficulty, if not — in some cases — the impossibility, of an effective struggle against relations of domination. Whereas Rancière emphasises ‘precisely the possibility of successful critique and resistance even in contexts of crass forms of domination’ (Sonderegger, 2012, p. 248). He argues that although there maybe ‘inequality in the manifestations of intelligence…there is no hierarchy of intellectual capacity’ (p. 28). Mistaken assumptions about ‘the inferiority of their intelligence’ (Rancière, 1991, 39) is what stultifies students from China (Asmar, 2005; Clark & Gieve, 2006; Durkin, 2008). The presupposition is performative: ‘the problem is not to prove that all intelligences are equal. It is to see what one can do as a consequence of this supposition’ (Rancière, 1991, p. 79).

Rancière (1991) proposes verification of the presupposition of intellectual equality as a grounding principle. He summons the students to use their inherent critical intelligence to achieve emancipation. Challenging students to show ‘what an intelligence can do’ when it considers itself equal to any other and considers any other equal to itself” (Rancière, 2009, p. 39), he champions the concept of intellectual equality. For educators, this means to ‘reveal [students’] intelligence to [themselves]’. Tanke (2011) argues that intellectual equality is ‘a principle that is either verified or denied by our educational and cultural practices’ and not ‘a goal to be advanced by educational reform’ (p. 89). Thus the presupposition that students from China as having the equal intelligence for critical thinking is to be verified or denied in this study.
The verification of *intellectual equality* requires ‘a process of subjectification through which all participating agents are empowered to find out for themselves how their conditions of living can be improved’ (Citton, 2010, p. 33). A potential critical intelligence gives Chinese international students the capability to learn by themselves, while the critical educator provides the opportunity for students to realise their power to learn (Citton, 2010, p. 30). In this matter of verification, Western Anglophone educators are presumed to equally intelligent as their Chinese international students, thereby their role does not consist in providing students with critical thinking that they lack - where they may not in fact lack this - but in helping them remove the obstacles to critical contribution through using their existing knowledge.

Chapter Two reports research on the potential for verification of the presupposition that Chinese students are already capable of critical thinking, and that their cultural linguistic background knowledge provides them with modes of critical thinking that they can elaborate for use in different contexts (e.g. Singh & Meng, 2011). That research signifies that the verification of *intellectual equality* is not a whole new topic, yet ready to be advanced. Pedagogies of double knowing can act to verify the presupposition.

### 3.5.1 Pedagogies of double knowing

*Double knowing* (Singh & Shrestha, 2008; Singh, 2011a; 2011b) locates international students in ‘nodes’ connecting with different knowledge ‘networks’ (Singh & Shrestha, 2008, p. 77). The key to successful cross-language intercultural study is building connections linking the new knowledge students absorb in Anglophone universities with the critical insight they have already obtained from their background educational setting (Tange & Kastberg, 2013). Pedagogies of *double knowing* acknowledge ‘the capability of multilingual students ‘for producing higher-order conceptual knowledge’ from their varied learning experience (Qi, 2015, p. 39).
Students from China can then be viewed as active critical knowers taking contemporary international education to a platform of East-West dialogue (Singh & Qi, 2013).

However, there is research arguing that this pedagogy needs to be applied with contextual sensitivity. Double knowing acknowledges students’ previous knowledge in their most familiar language, but the use of first language in second language learning is still a debatable issue. School management group were convinced that English needs to be the only instructional medium in English learning environment so students can get as much practices as they can (Swain et al., 2011). Allowing students to use their mother tongue gives them false sense of security, a comfort zone where they can always hide in, hence, slowing down their development in English learning. In this sense, Cai (2010) reported that some educators believed that intentionally ignoring students’ knowledge of home language, and forcing them get out of their comfort zone by promoting English-only literacy can help them to acquire English through constant exercises.

3.6 Divergence and Dialogue

In opposition to the bureaucratic process of *uniformization*, Jullien (2014) proposes a concept of intercultural *divergence*, ‘an understanding under the angle of exploration,’ an ‘equal opening up’ of *dialogue* between intelligent parties with different intellectual positions (pp. 141,152). In education, divergence invites an inventory of the multiplicity inherent in international education; reviewing encounters between cultural and intellectual subjects, it envisages an unthought of place and explores how to clear paths to that place (Jullien, 2014, p. 147). Divergence does not equate to ‘difference,’ which is a term describing the fact of distinction between one and another (Jullien, 2014, p.146), as for example with *intellectual inequality* (Rancière, 1991, p. 48). Divergence implies a positive process of divesting players from their ‘embedded national expectation’ and leading them to new directions in thinking (Jullien, 2014, p. 148). For Australian educators and Chinese international students, divergence has the potential to influence the
intellectual positioning of players in international education and determine the trajectory of academic activity.

In creating an environment where ‘multiple knowledge resources can be utilised on an international basis’ (Boyle et al., 2012, p. 302), divergence can combat cultural stereotypes and intellectual inequality (Rancière, 1991), and warn against labelling heritage traditions of overseas students as ‘alien practices’ (Tange & Kastberg 2013, p. 2). Awareness of divergence, based on intellectual equality (Rancière, 1991), means that knowledge-related differences need no longer be barriers to successful teaching and learning. Divergence prompts educators and students alike to reflect on the potential value of alternative insights in a pedagogical strategy of dialogue.

Dialogue does not mean negotiation of compromise in order to reduce any antagonism, as if plural cultures might be converging towards one single culture; rather, it implies the possibility of other meanings (Jullien, 2014, pp. 157,161,168). Dialogue can result in educators and students ‘seeing the connections’ through ‘interanimation of real voices’ (Ravenscroft, 2011, p. 141).

Grounded in the awareness of divergence, dialogue opposes intellectual inequality and uniformization as it activates multiple variables and discards control over discourse. Dialogue is not a matter of setting out what is true and what is false; dialogue concerns what has not been thought of or what has been suppressed in silence: the unthought (Jullien 2014, p. 153). A language, a culture, a thought, a Chinese international student, an Australian educator—each in its way in an environment of divergence can enrich educational engagements as it contributes the unthought.

Difference however persists. With the insights of Rancière (1991) and Jullien (2014), issues of critical thinking in international education are bound to result in new opportunities for different approaches. The next section examines a pedagogical alternative to the monolingual paradigm: Yildiz’s (2012) concept of the
postmonolingual condition, which can verify intellectual equality and realise divergence.

3.7 Postmonolingual condition

Yildiz (2012) has examined the dynamics of monolingualism and multilingualism through an in-depth study of Germanic literature. Rejecting the homogeneity of single language ideology, she demands acknowledgment of ‘multilingual and heterogeneous realities’ (Butler, 2013, p. 3). Arguing that the monolingual paradigm functions to obscure ‘the widespread nature of multilingualism’ (p. 203), Yildiz (2012) contends that the monolingual paradigm enforces the limitation of a privileged language, a language of ‘primary attachment’ that signifies belonging and ‘blocks from view the possibility of multiple, and even contradictory, attachments, of desire for something unfamiliar and unrelated as well as the pleasure derived from new connections’ (p. 204). It is undeniable that a common language, a lingua franca such as English, provides advantages in documenting and communicating academic knowledge world widely (Jenkins, 2007). However, on the other hand, a prevailing monolingual paradigm invites institutions and individuals to imagine that they ‘possess one “true” language’, which defines ‘an exclusive, clearly demarcated ethnicity, culture and nation,’ impeding multilingual practices through a form of social engineering (Yildiz, 2012, pp. 2, 3).

The postmonolingual condition provides a multilingual space where multiple languages coexist; a multilingual space that is rapidly transitioning beyond monolingual structures as individuals increasingly embrace other languages. Thus, the postmonolingual condition refers to multilingual struggle against the exclusive, clearly demarcated boundaries set down by the monolingual paradigm (Yildiz, 2012, p. 4).

Monolingualism persecutes linguistic minorities, restrains language policies, and minimises support for foreign language learning in schools around the world (Spyra, 2014). Working from ‘existing legacies of colonialism and modernity,’
monolingualism reinforces an unequal world structure (Karpinski, 2014, p. 21). The postcolonial postmonolingual condition is

a temporal and psychological state in which the persistence of the monolingual is affirmed and attempts to overcome it are spawned, rather than any announcement of its recent or imminent death (Wright, 2013, p. 737).

Students’ multilingual capabilities are becoming more visible with globalisation and the realignment of many nations in terms of diverse multinational interests. The postmonolingual condition questions concepts of language and identity, and can lead the subject to examine his or her place in a global context. Against the pressures of monlingualism, the postmonolingualism condition asserts the dignity of other languages, and right of each to be visible, and the right to contest issues in their own way (Yildiz, 2012, p. 3).

3.8 Discussion: verification of intellectual equality

The theory of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984; 1989; 2003) exposes class domination of education with its hierarchical classroom order. His attempt of exposing the difficulty in challenging the domination, however, hands out the theoretical underpin for reinforcing such hierarchy. One the other hand, Boltanski (2011) argues the hierarchy which is presented in his concept of institutional pressure, with its symbolic hidden dominance can be opposed by the critical transformative force of ordinary people. Rancière’s (1991) takes Bourdieu’s point as that society is governed by the hidden force possessed by knowers, for the unknowers are not capable of detecting new ways of seeing, thinking and acting without the enlightenment offered by the knowers. To address this issue, Rancière has dedicated a sizeable amount of his scholarship to interrogating this display of intellectual inequality, through ‘fettering out forms of knowledge that explicitly or implicitly deny the [critical] thoughts of ordinary men and women’ (Watts, 2010, p. 109). On the other hand, uniformization, an ‘enterprise of forced homogenisation,’ produces ‘pseudo-equality’ (Jullien, 2014, p.163); promoting standardisation of favoured interests as the only possible scenario, it tends to block divergent resources
and thinking. These concepts are used to address the ‘deficit’ view of ‘Chinese students’ explained in Chapter Two, and they play a role in the analysis and discussion of Chapters Five and Six.

The present chapter moves from the ‘deficit’ view to verification of the presupposition of intellectual equality (Rancière, 1991). This theoretical move can be understood in parallel with the conceptual shift from the ‘Chinese students’ to ‘multilingual students’ from China that is discussed in previous chapter. In the boldest interpretation of the deficit view of the uncritical ‘Chinese student’, the educator (the supposed knower) relies on an initial assumption of intellectual inequality, if not arrogance, as the modes of critical thinking and critical knowledge are handed down to their alleged deficit Chinese students (unknowers). Yet in this study, the presupposition of intellectual equality, which resonates with Boltanki’s (2011) idea of ordinary critique, argues that ordinary critical actors, in this case, ‘multilingual students’ from China, can appropriate critical schemes, concepts, and so on kinds of Chinese modes of critical thinking, to engage in knowledge production.

Acceptance of intellectual equality challenges to a deficit view of Chinese students’ capability of critical thinking, and works toward Jullien’s (2014) vision of divergence, through engaging with pedagogies of the postmonolingual condition (Yildiz, 2012). The verification of intellectual equality occurs through divergence, where through dialogue different intellectual positions are prepared to conceive new unthought of paths to understanding (Jullien, 2014), in the postmonolingual condition, which provides a multilingual space in which multiple languages co-exist (Yildiz 2012). This theoretical presupposition provide underpins for recognizing ‘multilingual students’ from China instead of deficit ‘Chinese students’. Such a conceptual shift moves away from seeing these students as them as ‘non-English speakers’ or ‘speakers of English as a foreign language’ (Aiguo, 2007). In doing so, they are no longer taken as refugees the English-only monolingual paradigm in which tries to uniform the Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking to, but equally intelligent entities that can contribute to the divergence of knowledge.
framework through employing Chinese modes of critical thinking in a postmonolingual condition.

Enlightenment with the presupposition of intellectual equality, and empowerment with the pedagogies of the postmonolingual condition, underlies divergence in multilingual and intercultural education. In this sense, Rancière’s argument of verification of intellectual equality ‘consists in affirming emancipatory moves’ (Sonderegger, 2012, p. 248).

None of these concepts have yet explicitly addressed the use of Chinese modes of critical thinking in Anglophone universities. However, all these key ideas inform the development of the practical idea of using students’ Chinese modes of critical thinking as a knowledge base for extending these students’ capabilities for critical thinking.

3.8 Conclusion to Chapter Three

This chapter has set out key concepts that inform and guide the analysis implemented in this thesis. The concepts defined and explained in this chapter guide the collection and analysis of data in this research project. As theoretical tools, they act as ‘guidance for emancipation’ through reflection on educational processes involved (Johansson & Lindhult, 2008, p.96). This study does not necessarily endorse all the reasoning of the authors of the concepts, yet all the key concepts inform the developing idea of using mode of critical thinking brought by students from China, in Chinese, as a knowledge base to extend their capabilities for critical thinking in their overseas academic experience, as explored in detail in Chapter Seven.
CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

4.0 Introduction

This chapter explains and justifies the research methodology and methods used in this study. This chapter first sets out the methodology of this study—its underlying philosophical assumptions and the intellectual content that informs the research—and then the research methods or process — ‘the techniques and procedures to conduct research’ (McGregor & Murnane, 2010, p.420). Chapters Two and Three have set out background to a ‘deficit view’ that international Chinese students generally, tend to be passive learners, and do not—or cannot—demonstrate a critical thinking ability. The research in this study critically examines the evidence for such a view from the point of view of multilingual students from China, by providing illustration of Chinese modes of critical thinking. The present chapter is based on a process of ‘enlightenment’ which shows the disconnect between the apparent image of ‘Chinese students’ and the reality of their engagement with the study of English and critical thinking (Rancière, 2009). This chapter follows on from the aim of Chapter Three, to understanding critical thinking of international postgraduate research students from China and place the issue in research context. This chapter, while not ignoring problems of alleged uncritical ‘Chinese students’ in education in critical thinking in an Anglophone environment, seeks to detach discussion from fixed social perceptions and rationales in order to achieve a path of ‘empowerment’ that aims to unfold opportunities for students from China to verify their intellectual equality (Rancière, 1991).
4.1 Methodological underpinning

Educational research has the value of applying theory to the analysis of educational practices (Qi, 2015) and ‘engaging in unfettered argument about education issues’ in complicated social contexts (Berliner, 2002, p.19). The discourse in this study is directed by the research focus of verification of intellectual equality, by interpreting and assessing the capabilities for critical thinking of international postgraduate research students from China through Chinese modes of critical thinking.

4.1.1 Educational research as ‘hard’ science

Educational research has been dismissed as ‘soft science’ by comparison with the ‘hard science’ of the natural sciences (Berliner, 2002; Erickson, 2012). For instance, Gruppen (2008) reports that the medical education researchers are considered to be working in ‘soft’ science with the implication of that their research is ‘sloppy’ (p. 1), while their clinical colleagues see their own work as hard science, despite the fact that they work within the same basic science. Berliner (2002) however points out that educational researchers work ‘under conditions that physical scientists find intolerable,’ and might be considered ‘hardest-to-do:’

We face particular problems and must deal with local conditions that limit generalisations and theory building—problems that are different from those faced by the easier-to-do sciences [chemistry, biology, medicine]. (Berliner, 2002, p.18).

The complexities that exist in education and in society itself mean that educational research implies difficulty for researchers to understand, control or predict the phenomena and issues they study. In the present study, for example, ‘Chinese modes of critical thinking’ involves quantitative values that are not precisely determined. Their critical thinking involves cultural differences; it may be affected by their emotional burdens, their ways of presenting their ideas, the expectations of their teachers. One cannot be sure of the direction of influence by various interacting factors. This emphasises the uncertainty of educational science (Berliner, 2002, p.18). New variables emerging from fundamental issues may lead to alternative scenarios.
The possibilities opened during investigation can mean ongoing educational debate within the remit of a course of enquiry.

A piece of educational research can be viewed as ‘the collection and analysis of information on the world of education so as to understand and explain it better’ (Opie, cited in Bradley et al. 2008, p. 27). Good educational research requires careful consideration of constructed designs through ‘the most appropriate methods of data collection and analysis with the purpose of answering research questions aimed at understanding the world of education’ (Bradley et al., 2008, p. 27).

In line with the difficulty of defining and measuring critical thinking as well as assessing the extent of individual critical thinking among large numbers of students from China of different ages and levels of education, the research undertaken in this study does NOT attempt to ‘prove’ that students from China are capable of critical thinking or ‘test’ such capabilities. Given that the charge of uncritical thinking is generalised, it is also difficult to refute. This investigation rather aims to develop alternative ways to interpret the issue and elucidate associated problems through demonstrating Chinese modes of critical thinking. A first step in doing this will be an informed understanding of methodology.

4.1.2 Methodological understanding

It will be useful at this point to define terms used in this connection. Research may be described as rigorous, systematic ‘investigation of inquiry whereby data are collected, analysed and interpret in some way’ for the sake of achieving understanding, description, prediction or control regarding a social issue, ‘to empower individuals’ (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, Research, para 1). A theory is used to establish relationships ‘between or among constructs that describe or explain a phenomenon by going beyond the local event and trying to connect it with similar events’ (Mertens, 2005, cited in Mackenzie & Knipe, ibid).

The term paradigm may be used in relation to such a theoretical framework (Kuhn, 1962). A paradigm may be described as ‘a loose collection of logically related
assumptions, concepts or propositions that orient thinking and research’ (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, cited in Mack, 2010, p.2). A paradigm constitutes a way of viewing reality (McGregor & Murnane, 2010). Thus a paradigm can encapsulate research methods of uncovering knowledge of social relationships in order to ensure a consistent interpretation of reality (Mack, 2010). In a process of responsible scholarly detachment, researchers are able to consciously identify a research paradigm and apply appropriate methodology, minimising ‘the risk of relinquishing their responsibility to account for the philosophical underpinnings of their work’ (McGregor & Murnane, 2010, p. 419). A clear research paradigm is necessary for informed choice of theoretical underpinnings—research question, methodology and specific methods (Grix, 2004).

To identify a clear research paradigm, accordingly, this study seeks to clearly identify the researcher’s ontological position (what I consider can be researched), and link this to my epistemological position (what can be known about this) and my methodological approach (how I go about acquiring knowledge of the issue) (Grix, 2004, p.68). In this study, an ontological approach takes in what this study thinks can be researched: claims of what reality, or at least, part of reality, actually is. To do this, it uncovers why Chinese students’ capabilities for critical thinking is a topic worth investigating. It forms a debate around the uncritical Chinese students, as well as illustrates evidence of Chinese international students’ capabilities for critical thinking through engaging Chinese modes of critical thinking (Chapters Two & Three). An epistemological approach refers to what readers can know about the topic through this investigation, and findings in relation to knowledge are derived through a series of detailed research procedures set out later in this chapter. In following chapters, the study presents material from the data sources about the modes of critical thinking ordinary critical actors from China, especially postgraduate students (Chapters Five to Seven), as well as how readers may investigate the topic further (Chapter Eight).
4.1.3 The researcher’s position

Since I myself am currently an international postgraduate student from China and cannot be considered detached from the research process, it is essential that I make explicit the position that I am taking (Meng, 2012). Stonebanks (2008) argues that acknowledgement of the researcher’s values and subjectivity will tend to help the reader understand the process of research more deeply.

The idea that all researchers, whether they be professional or student, bring their preconceived notions, prior knowledge, culture and/or theoretical leanings on the subject to be studied with them has become understood, and researchers are acknowledging this by revealing their background to their readers (pp. 296, 297).

On the other hand, Lumsden (2012) views researchers who bring in their identity, voice and beliefs as a risk in terms of a reflexive approach, ‘privileging excessive self-analysis and deconstructions at the expense of focusing on the research participants and developing understanding’ (p. 2). Berger (2015) however adopts a position that takes into account both sides of this question, holding that researchers should always consider their position as ‘fluid rather than static,’ continually reflecting on and discussing their own position in relation to ‘the potential ramifications of this position on their research’ (p. 231). He (2015) suggests researchers should constantly update their own position by repeated introspection as well as discussion with others (p. 231).

As the researcher of this study and the author of this thesis, I acknowledge that my standpoint is influenced by my identity as an international postgraduate student from China. I have not explored my research topic in a totally impersonal way, as if it had no relation to me personally. I have in fact taken my own situation as a point of departure for this study (Meng, 2012), in that my Chinese intellectual heritage together with the linguistic and theoretical resources I acquired in China have informed my initial standpoint. In terms of motive, I acknowledge that a widely held view of Chinese students, including postgraduate students, as having poor performance in critical thinking, and as being uncritical, passive learners, has driven me to address the causes of this problem and to uncover the Chinese intellectual resources available to these students, especially postgraduates, in the hope that they
may effectively display their critical resources in an Anglophone educational environment.

For me personally, this study is a journey of emancipation—a process of discovering how I personally can apply my heritage language and education, including my experience in critical analysis in China, to my studies in Australia. Apart from my increased personal self-confidence, I am gratified by what I see of the liberation of my fellow postgraduate students from China as they are drawn to new forms of dialogue to cross the monolingual divide. There is in fact a certain personal identity with my fellows, inasmuch as I am a member of the research cohort. Yet emancipatory research is about the ‘facilitating of a politics of the possible by confronting social oppression at whatever levels it occurs’ (Oliver, 1997, p.16). The issue for emancipatory research is

not how to empower people but, once people have decided to empower themselves, precisely what research can then do to facilitate this process… researchers have to learn how to put their knowledge and skills at the disposal of their research subjects, for them to use in whatever ways they choose (Oliver, 1997, p.17).

The present situation in Anglophone academia is not ‘oppression’, but rather a situation, from the point of view of many students from China, where there is a kind of de facto suppression of opportunity for them to express themselves, perhaps unintended but nevertheless impacting on their critical performance. In the name of emancipation, this study attempts to attach meanings to situations, but does not try to negotiate meaning with participants in the research process. Yet I hope that it may make some contribution to the intellectual emancipation of (international) students from China.

As far as independence is concerned, I have avoided taking sides in the methodological process of the research, but continually made a deliberate effort to remove myself ideologically from the cohort under investigation, at the same time seeking advice from supervisors, peers and other academics about how my current position might affect the study. I have explicitly recognised my ‘dual identity,’ as a researcher and also a member of the community being studied (Berger, 2015). To a point this research has been influenced by this dual identity, as when I have
suggested intervention in pedagogies that have been influenced by the monolingual paradigm (Yildiz, 2012) and intellectual inequality (Rancière, 1991). Nevertheless, although my own standpoint forms the point of entry for this research, it does not equate to the focus of the research or its conclusions or end point.

4.2 Research questions

Defining the research questions is ‘the first and the most important condition for differentiating among the various research strategies’ (Yin, 2014, p.11). The research questions embody the quintessential purpose of a study. The components of the research questions link directly to all the other components of the research design, and ‘should be responsive to every other part of the study’ (Maxwell, 2012, p.73). The processes of definition and redefinition of the research questions at the heart of this study have been based on careful study of the current research in the field.

Informed by the understanding of substance and tensions that lay behind the research topic through reviewing literature and theories, this study is grounded on Rancière’s (1991) presupposition that students from China are of equal intelligence to students from Anglophone countries, and that they have equal potential for performance of critical thinking. The study then works towards verifies this presupposition through demonstrating Chinese modes of critical thinking. To address the research problems, the main research question has been identified in Chapter One as:

How might the presupposition of intellectual equality with regards to international postgraduate research students from China studying in Anglophone universities be verified through Chinese modes of critical thinking?

To elaborate on this main question, the study preliminarily raised three simple and straight forward questions:

a. What are Chinese modes of critical thinking like?
b. Why are international students from China considered uncritical in Australian universities?

c. How can this study help Chinese students and their educators to struggle against such deficit cultural characterisation with regard to critical thinking?

To further detail this question, the contributory research questions have evolved as follows:

1. What types of Chinese modes of critical thinking emerge from Chinese contemporary popular culture, and how do these modes operate? (Chapter Five)

2. What mechanisms constrain critical thinking performance of students from China generally, postgraduate students in particular, in learning and research as defined in Anglophone universities? (Chapter Six)

3. What Chinese modes of critical thinking find expression in Chinese postgraduate students’ learning and research? In what ways can engaging these modes contribute to a reciprocal approach to learning, research and teaching? (Chapter Seven)

Chapter Two relates that the demonstration of modes of critical thinking in China has been suppressed by historical trauma and political censorship, so that Chinese critical actors have been obliged to find oblique ways of presenting their critical arguments. To illustrate this, rather than concentrate on the critical wisdom of ancient elite Chinese thinkers such as Confucius, this study focuses on the critical potential of contemporary Chinese critical actors. The social issues present in contemporary Chinese popular culture mean that critical thinking occurs through different angles and results in the creation of diversified critical strategies and skills. In other words, Chinese people engage in critical thinking as a tool to explore social issues through creative narrative. Given a felt need for caution in relation to possible censorship pressure, authors may strategically situate the social issues in a context that does not exist in recent centuries—say, an imperial palace in the Qin dynasty in the second century BC—while the issues discussed in their innovative narrative writing are closely linked with modern society. Readers of such texts will be cognisant of the
critical arguments inherent in the narrative as they engage in critical thinking in their own critical everyday practice of assigning praise or blame to phenomena.

The study follows the first research question which considers the possibilities of Chinese modes of critical thinking Chinese ordinary critical actors produce through written matter in popular culture:

1(a) What are the possible strategies and skills used to express critical thinking in Chinese popular culture, specifically in a popular novel?  
1(b) How do students perceive this kind of critical thinking and how do they construct their own critical thinking out of it?

Here the aim is first to analyse the ways critical thinking has been expressed in a popular novel in relation to socially significant topics and issues, and then to analyse students’ comment to determine ways in which the novel’s critical opinions are perceived. It is expected that this will help readers of this study to identify modes of critical strategies employed in this kind of context in China, through providing a vignette of a form of Chinese critical thinking practice.

Having established this initial understanding of indirect narrative as a critical instrument, the second stage of analysis attempts to identify the outworking of a principle of indirect criticism, in a specific kind of educational situation. Thus the question emerges of

2. Why do students from China demonstrate unsatisfactory critical performance in their learning and research in Anglophone universities? And a related question: Can this be interpreted as a parallel to the critical thinking strategies finding expression in popular culture?

Two questions arise from students from China engagement with Chinese modes of critical thinking:

88
3(a) Do students from China engage Chinese modes of critical thinking through their heritage of language and theoretical knowledge? If so, how does such engagement help them or hinder them in critical thinking?

Here a small group of educators have been invited to participate through monitoring critical performance of postgraduate students from China. The question was:

3(b) How can pedagogical approaches improve capacity of students from China for critical thinking? And an auxiliary question: How can such pedagogical approaches engage with these students’ Chinese modes of critical thinking in order to contribute to Australian-Chinese knowledge co-production?

4.3 Research design procedure

Given the essential relationship between the form of the research questions and the research strategy, the research design is as follows.

4.3.1 Case study as a research strategy

Following the nature of the research questions as they attempt to determine ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how,’ this study follows Yin’s (2014) suggestion of basing the research strategy on a case study, ‘to cover contextual conditions—believing that they might be highly pertinent to [the] phenomenon of study’ (Yin, 2014, p.16).

Case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a 'real life' context. It is research-based, inclusive of different methods and is evidence-led. The primary purpose is to generate in-depth understanding of a specific topic (as in a thesis),

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1 In an introductory book on ‘case study research’ Yin stated that if research questions focus mainly on ‘what’ questions, two possibilities emerge. First, some types of ‘what’ questions are exploratory. This type of question is a justifiable rationale for conducting an exploratory study, the goal being to develop pertinent hypotheses and propositions for further inquiry. The second type of ‘what’ question is actually a form of a ‘how many’ or ‘how much’ line of inquiry. Identifying such results is more likely to favour survey or archival strategies than others. On the other hand, ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are more explanatory and more likely to lead to the use of a case study as preferred research method. These types of question deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than in terms of mere frequencies or incidence (2014, p.10).
programme, policy, institution or system to generate knowledge and/or inform policy development, professional practice and civil or community action (Simons, 2009, p.21).

This study investigates a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has no real-world control. A case study method is adopted for the research, to deal with ‘a full variety of evidence-documents, artefacts, interviews and observations’ and offer ‘a comprehensive research strategy’ (Yin, 2014, pp.12, 18), hopefully leading to insights and new thinking about real social behaviours and their meaning (Yin, 2011, p.4). Case study research is endowed with wide diversity in the design of a study, and is sufficiently flexible to be compatible with the case and the research questions (Hyett, Kenny & Dickson-Swift, 2014). The anticipated outcome of the present study will be an understanding of a complex educational issue, as well as an expectation of contributing new ways of learning and coping with the issue.

As well as covering a wide range of subjects, including education and community studies in social science for example, the case study approach also has ‘a long and important role in clinical and biographical research,’ considered as ‘hard science.’ As noted in 4.1.1 above, educational research is often considered to be more ‘soft’ than clinical research in medicine, even where the research is done in a similar field. With this background in mind, here a case study of research method in applied clinical biology is examined in terms of a rigorous research strategy: in their research report on molecular biology, Joly, et al. (2015) point out that complex thinking is needed to interpret cases where ‘individual properties vary as a function of both genetic and environmental polymorphisms’ (p. 117). They go on to reason that a case study could provide individual perspectives for ‘a more suitable framework for integrating’ their research topic (p. 117). Their study accordingly moved from a research standpoint of biological data analysis to a personalised account which stressed the need to tailor medical interpretation of phenomena to what can be contributed by individual complex thinking. In another study on computational biomedicine, Joly and Rondó (2015) call for ‘far greater attention to the issue of complexity’ so that individuals may cope with ‘a new array of problems that would have been unthinkable’ (p. 1). Following this innovative approach to in-depth individual experience with complex thinking, the present approach to its own research problems takes account of
individual understanding and individual perspectives, and considers a case study approach to be relevant and sufficiently rigorous for the purposes of the study.

In this research, the case (instance) is the Chinese modes of critical thinking which international students from China have brought. The larger ‘phenomenon’ to which it relates can be understood as an intellectual inequality associated with monolingual bias against students using their full linguistic repertoire in favour of a taken-for-granted acceptance of Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking. As was discussed in introduction and chapter two, the phenomenon of intellectual inequality largely exists against the international students not only from China, but also from other Asian couturtries that allegedly privileging uncritical pedagogies (Yan & Berliner, 2011b; Li & Wegerif, 2014; Reer 2016).

4.3.2 Flexible research design

The research design is a plan that guides the investigator in the process of collecting, analysing, and interpreting observations (Yin, 2014; Bordens & Abbott, 2002). It is ‘a logical model of proof that allows the researcher to draw inferences concerning causal relations among the variables under investigation’ (Nachmias & Nachmias, cited in Yin, 2014, p.28, 20). Yin (2014) notes that a main purpose of a research design is to create a ‘blueprint’ that will avoid a situation where the analysis of evidence does not address the research problems initially proposed. However, he also notes that very few case studies will conclude exactly as planned. If unanticipated events occur, the investigation will need to make changes to cope with exigencies while maintaining the original purpose.

As a ‘hard science’, educational research is not ‘a smooth, linear process, but rather follows ‘an uneven, stumbling and wavering path’ (Griffiths, cited in Meng, 2012). The present research has followed a flexible design, informed by the conviction of some researchers that substantial prior structuring of the research method design can result in an inflexible response to ‘emergent insights’ and methodological ‘tunnel vision’ in interpreting evidence (Maxwell, 2012, p. 88). In the case of the present study, response to unexpected situations was allowed, as all the research procedures were subject to change and modification (Robson, 2002). Since the aim is to reveal
processes that lead to specific outcomes, the study relies heavily on ‘contextual understanding’, and this favours a less structured method (Maxwell, 2012, p. 89) that may explore particular educational issues and provide open space to individually tailored approaches, in order to produce a deeper and more holistic interpretation.

There has thus been no initially fixed idea about the aspects of the theoretical framework and research methodology that might be most helpful in this study. The research questions determining data collection are divided into two stages. First data were collected from the popular novel and a preliminary analysis of critical thinking strategies was carried out. Then, in a second stage, data were collected from interviews. Although the second stage of data collection is itself not dependent on the first stage, nevertheless the focus of attention in the second stage will be strongly influenced by the developing interpretive picture of the first stage. In this way there is a need to be adaptable and flexible during the process of progressive refinement within the manageable focus area of the thesis. The researcher has had to maintain an unbiased perspective in acknowledge the data collected from the first stage while continuously refining her second stage questions and design.

Strategies accordingly move ‘from broad, desirable aims of the research to specific working research questions that will determine the shape, direction and progress of the research’ (Andrews, 2003, p. 4). In the process it can happen that ‘the selection of cases may have to be modified because of new information’ (Yin, 2014, p. 52). So it has happened that in some early data collection and analysis, I revisited the initial questions and plans, altered the order of propositions, and modified the design, on the principle that emergent insights may require ‘new research questions, new interview questions,’ supplementary sources and the identification of new relationships (Maxwell, 2012, p. 89). Thus out of a degree of uncertainty that was in fact anticipated from the beginning, the present research design has been constructed in response to the questions that I have proposed, in line with the limited time frame and resources available.

Various rigorously critical methods and techniques were adopted to optimise analysis of the research questions, including analysing cultural artefact and interviews. Figure 4.1 represents the research design that emerged during the course of the study.
With this research design in mind, the following section takes up the questions of the validity and reliability of the design.
4.3.3 Validity

The aim of educational research work should be to develop ‘true’ accounts. Now *truth* or *truthfulness* is what is meant by validity ‘interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers’ (Hammersley, cited in Douglas, 2014, p.56), implying the ‘appropriateness of the interpretations, inferences, and actions.’ Internal validity relates to the causal connections and inferences made in the case study. To strengthen the study’s internal validity, I adopted a procedure of *pattern matching*, were a variety of *patterns* were explored through literature and theories (Yin, 2014). Exploring and understanding the research topic has resulted in a porotype pattern for a theoretical framework, while data analysis has provided an empirically based pattern. Then to construct a set of explanations through coding, these patterns were compared. Correlating the two patterns through making assumptions and revisions and refining them resulted in a set of causal links. These causal links revealed ‘escalating richness and nuance in the data’ (Qi, 2015, p.54).

*External validity* concerns understanding whether a study’s findings are generalisable beyond the specific case study, regardless of the research methods employed (Yin, 2014). Where the case study relies on analytic generalisation, I have striven to ‘generalise a particular set of results to some broader theory’ (Yin, 2014, p.40), and followed a principle of allowing the projection of theoretical insights to other contexts where they possess ‘a sufficient degree of generality or universality’ (Robson, 2002, p.177). Informed conceptual tools generated by the case study (see Chapter Three) for studying Chinese postgraduate students’ capabilities for critical thinking in Chinese as well as in English enabled initial causal links to be tested empirically; hopefully new insights generated in this way will create a more informed educational context for future research.

Concerns for validation will involve cross-checking, critiquing and conceptualising the evidence. Rather than trying to eliminate all such threats through the research design, I have focused on how to ‘rule out specific plausible alternatives and threats
to interpretations and explanations’ (Maxwell, 2012, p.107). The next section focuses on triangulation as a specific validating technique used in the study.

4.3.3.1 Triangulation

The technique of triangulation, defined as ‘collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods’ (Maxwell, 2012, p.112), is employed in this study to carefully examine counter-evidence and counter-arguments in order to test and refine proposed theoretical resources. Multiple sources of evidence are used to enhance the rigour of the research, reducing the risk of chance associations, minimising systematic bias due to use of a specific method, and allowing for improved assessment of the theoretical generalisability of the explanations developed in the study (Maxwell, 2012).

Rather than relying on a single source, triangulation uses multiple sources of data and theory to arrive at fuller understanding of the research problem (Yin, 2014). In the present study, a novel and interviews comprise the data collection sources. Particular attention is paid to multiple theoretical sources, including concepts developed by Bourdieu (1977; 1984; 2003), Luc Boltanski (2011), Rancière (1991, 2009), Jullien (2014), Singh (2008; 2011a; 2011b), and Yildiz (2012). Reference to these relevant but varied intellectual sources enables diversified analysis of a broad range of issues.

It remains true however that triangulated data or methods could share similar bias or another source of invalidity, and the use of triangulation will not ipso facto guarantee validity. Accordingly, I have looked closely for discrepancies or disagreements among the different data sources, and error or bias, rather than simply rely on apparent technical reliability of methods used to trace causation (Maxwell, 2012).

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2 Denzin (2010) distinguishes four types of triangulation: data triangulation, using a variety of data sources within a single study; investigator triangulation, using more than one investigator in the study; methodological triangulation; using different methods to address the same research problem; and theory triangulation, using different theoretical models to make sense of the same set of data. This study specifically employs data triangulation and theory triangulation.
Furthermore, as explained in Section 4.1.3, fellow students and other scholars have been regularly invited to participate in discussion involving validity as well as other research issues.

4.3.4 Reliability

I have aimed to ‘minimise the errors and biases’ in my study (Yin, 2014, p.36), working towards ‘consistency, reasonability and stability over time’ (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.278). I have seen my duty as ‘to make as many steps as operational as possible’ and to conduct the project ‘as if someone were always looking over [my] shoulder’ (Yin, 2014, p.37), endeavouring to ensure that a hypothetical auditor will be able to ‘produce the same results if the same procedures are followed’ (Yin, 2014, p. 37).

Thus I have developed careful plans for the significant procedures of data collection and analysis to enhance the reliability and quality of this research. It is critical to the reliability of this case study that a clear chain of evidence is established and documented. This chain of evidence should allow readers to reconstruct my progress from the initial research questions to the final conclusions (Yin, 1994), and so it should embody an ‘explication of the data collection procedures, including a reflection on the planned versus actual process, as well as on a discussion of data analysis procedures’ (Gibbert & Guigrok, 2010, p.713). In all this, ethical concerns cannot be ignored.

4.4 Ethics approval

Researchers have an ethical responsibility to ‘acknowledge their impact on the research [participants] and their role in the co-construction of the data set’ (Hett & Hett, 2013, p.498). Ethical treatment of research participants is ‘the most important and fundamental issue that researchers confront’ when conducting a research study
(Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p.103). Contributors to research need to be ‘able to exercise free power of choice, without the intervention of any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, over-reaching, or other ulterior form of constraint or coercion’ (Nelson, et al., 2011, p.7). Arguably three main ethical concerns in the present study are ‘fairness in the selection of participants;’ protection of participants; and ‘appropriate balance of risk and potential benefit’ (Nelson, et al., 2011, p.6). I have attempted to ensure that all the informants involved in this research project have participated voluntarily, understanding from the beginning the nature of the study and its benefits and risks.

My data sources for the first stage of research come from a public resource, which is a published novel. As the novel was publicly accessible, this part of the study required no ethical approval to access, and entailed no requirements to render the name of any anonymous organisation.

In the case study, fairness in the selection of research participants was indicated in the way participants were approached. I asked a university media centre involved in student activities and administration to issue an email of invitation, the text of which was also printed and displayed on the campus notice board to publicise recruitment of participants. Potential participants could choose to respond to the advertisement or not; if they responded, their participation would be voluntary. All participants were provided with an information sheet stating the purpose of the research, data usage, all intended procedures, and all instruments to be involved. The participants were also informed that all their contributions to the research would be preserved. Thus all the participants were ‘voluntarily participating in the research with full knowledge of relevant risks and benefits’ (Smith, 2003, p.56).

Protection of participants is an issue that arises at two levels: ‘that of an individual person within a case and that of the entire case’ (Yin, 2014, p.143). This is significant because not only have I been obliged to protect participants’ confidentiality in this case study, I am also responsible for managing the risks and benefits to them caused by their participation in this study.
Consent forms were required to explain the procedures to protect participant confidentiality, and relevant explanation was also provided orally before the actual interview process. Participants were informed that their confidentiality and privacy were respected, meaning that they could choose whether or not to be recorded, skip questions they did not wish to answer, and stop the interview if increasingly detailed questions made them uncomfortable. They were free to choose how much information about themselves they would reveal, and under what circumstances. All recordings of interviews were securely stored and tagged by the use of a code rather than by indicating actual names and schools. In the reports, pseudonyms have used where appropriate to protect the identity of individuals.

The likely benefits of this proposed research clearly outweigh any risk of harm or discomfort to participants, which in any case has been minimal. There has been no salient risk to participants as a result of participation. The research focuses on collecting perspectives and experiences of uses of Chinese modes of critical thinking in educational research and research education, as a means to verify the presupposition of intellectual equality. Participants have in no way been forced to intervene in these matters; however expected benefits for participated include developing student participants’ capacity to engage in critical thinking in different language and educational contexts, and helping educator participants to consider issues in their teaching and supervision that related to the topic. Thus their future research and education might benefit from employing cross-language modes of critical thinking, on the basis of intellectual equality, and scope for this has been able to be discussed during the interview process.

Awareness of intercultural ethical issues has been established through the collection of data from China. Hett & Hett (2013) argue that although researchers in Australia have important help from Institutional Research Boards (IRBs) in ‘safeguard[ing] the wellbeing of participants and setting standards for ethically sound research,’ there is increasing awareness that researchers should not advocate ‘a one-size-fits-all approach to ethical issues,’ especially in ‘non-Western settings’ (pp. 496-497). This ethical concern has been addressed here, especially prior to data collection. As a Chinese international postgraduate student, I am a native speaker of Mandarin and I have completed Bachelor and Master degrees in Australian universities. I have been
able to conduct the interviews in Chinese or English as appropriate and comfortable for each participant, and I am aware of Chinese cultural conventions. It is true that my status as a Chinese international student, a doctoral candidate at an Australian university, could have some bearing on the research process. I was also forthcoming about my own theoretical perspectives. Rather than attempt to formulate comprehensive answers to questions of potential conflict, my approach has been to record and analyse the evidence I collected, at the same time continually seeking advice and feedback relating to my own position in the case study (Section 4.1.3).

After ethics approval, this study proceeded to the stage of data collection.

4.5 Data collection

The collection of data for this study has relied on many different evidentiary sources, where no single source has a total advantage over any other. Concurrent yet separate collections of data inform each other and interact, capitalising on strengths while compensating for weaknesses (Wynn & Williams, 2012): ‘the various sources are highly complementary’ (Yin, 2014, p.105). Multiple data sources facilitate the development of potential explanations; it is not a matter of repeatedly confirming specifics of experience, structure, and context rather the point is the potential to achieve abstraction, a clearer understanding of the causal factors and relationships (Yin, 2014).

Use of varied sources can improve the quality of the research. As the researcher ‘avoids examining the phenomenon through a limited viewpoint, instead opting for wider perspective’ (Wynn & Williams, 2012, p. 803), stronger evidence may emerge in support of a theory. In the hope of achieving a novel combination of sources to shed light on a controversial yet important topic of some complexity—critical thinking by Chinese international students—this study has focused on using textual artefacts as data sources.
4.5.1 Textual artefacts

Films, photographs and videotapes as well as other written and oral texts can be seen as sources of emergent powers that in conjunction with beliefs of social actors exert causal influence and so may appropriately be used to examine social issues (Wynn & Williams, 2012, p. 792). Other artefacts that slowly and subtly ‘scaffold individual performance’ can be internalised in alien moral, social and theoretical contexts, as shown in case studies (Sutton, 2008, p. 204). Skilful use of a reliable sets of artefacts can be a ‘culturally anchored way to deal with context’ of the society producing the artefacts (p. 212).

As was pointed in 4.1.3, scholars argue that researchers bring their background social, cultural, linguistic and educational experience into account of their reflexive approach, developing understanding of research participants on the ground of excessive self-analysis (Lumsden, 2012; Stonebanks, 2008). Building on the fields in which I majored in my BA at undergraduate level, I find literature provides important opportunities to demonstrate contemporary modes of critical thinking. It insightfully reflects the social dynamic that is at play, whether directly or indirectly. Literature, in other words, text artefact, is an artistic operation that lends itself to some forms of critical debate (Rancière, 2009). It offers various ways to its readers and audiences to approach it, and invites them to add their critical thinking upon itself. Thus, a textual artefact can be proven to be a valuable resource to interpret ordinary critical actors’ critical practices.

The textual artefact in the next section, the novel Empresses in the Palace: Zhen Huan Zhuan, presents socially accepted strategies and modes of critical thinking used in China. These are identified and measured against perspectives and practices by Chinese critical actors through the interviews that followed in 4.5.2.

4.5.1.1 The novel Empresses in the Palace

Empresses in the Palace: Zhen Huan Zhuan (甄嬛传 ‘The story of Zhen Huan’) by Liu Lianzi 流潋紫, (2007) has been carefully chosen for a number of reasons. First
of all its popularity is indicative of its social acceptance by Chinese audiences. *Empresses in the Palace* was originally an online story; its popularity by viewers led to its publication as a printed book in 2007. In the very same year, the book has been reprinted for eight times to meet the market requirement. In 2012 the novel became an instantly popular television series.⁴ Because of its huge success in China, the television series was introduced to Japan⁵, and there have been plans for introduction to the United States⁶. The story has been characterised as quintessentially Chinese (Guo, 2013; Li, 2013). The story’s influence on everyday life has been noticeable, with valid or misleading application to real life.⁶ Its style of language has become an online trend, whether admiring or sarcastic.⁷ Critical issues raised in the story and arising out of the series have made the text of *Empresses in the Palace* a potential instrument to investigate various kinds of critical thinking relating to its own focus on social issues. The limitations on time and other aspects of feasibility of this case study mean that only the written text of the novel is examined here, rather than the whole scope of its imagery, sound and other television and online characteristics.

My characterisation of this story as evidence of Chinese modes of critical thinking has not been arbitrary or motivated by personal interest. The director of the television series has himself recognised the novel’s strong critical attitude towards the nature of the ‘palace’ in China, and so has paid particular attention to preserving the novel’s critical features in his production of the drama (Liang, 2012). After a brief preliminary exploration of the novel, I have recognised that its discourses were

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3 The audience rating has shown continuous increase. It stayed at the top of television audience rating chart for 24 consecutive days, and at the top of the internet audience rating for 34 days. Its click rate online exceeded a total 2.4 billion within one month and a half (Gu, 2012, A4).
4 Japanese local media reported an audience rating exceeding 39.72 million within a week (Guo, 2013).
5 The series has been introduced into Chinese channels in America, though without English subtitles, so virtually exclusively for Chinese audiences. At the beginning of 2013, the director of ‘Empresses in the Palace’ drafted a contract with an American media company, planning to edit the original television series into a six episode series and introduce it to American local channels (Li, 2013).
6 A news reporter pointed out that although most television dramas are fictional, audiences frequently take the situations presented seriously. (Cong, 2013, retrieved from [http://news.dsqq.cn/kbtt/2013/02/01084929883.html](http://news.dsqq.cn/kbtt/2013/02/01084929883.html)). The social impact of the story’s moral dynamic has not yet been tested by time, but its ‘tricky strategies’ somehow leave a clear impression. That is not necessarily to say that such strategies might become guidelines to skills in survival, but they have led people to reflect critically on them. Thus the ultimate effects of the program remain to be seen (Guo, 2012).
7 As with the television series, the ‘Zhen Huan (甄嬛) style’ of language became trendy online. Wang stated that the popularity of ‘Zhen Huan style’ has its inevitability. According to Wang (2012) the literary quality of the lines are appropriate to the esthetic Chinese language appropriate to calm and elegant feminine classical feminine beauty. However the complex ambiguity of choice of words led to some online writers mimicking this style by intentionally converting simple statements into long, confusing utterances.
closely linked to the conceptual issue of ‘critical thinking’ and clearly confirmed the novel’s appropriateness for this case study (see table 4.1 below).

Table 4.1: Relevance of ‘Empresses In the Palace’ as research material

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourses in the material</th>
<th>Relevance to this case study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The main theme of struggle in the palace</td>
<td>Institutional pressure (Boltanski, 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The aggressive yet subtle power struggle conducted by royal concubines is</td>
<td>Critical thinking produced by ordinary people under institutional pressure (Boltanski, 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>presented, centring on the attention and authority granted given by the emperor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How an innocent, simple girl gradually acquires sophistication to protect herself in</td>
<td>Progressive Chinese modes of critical thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tense and uncertain surroundings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The language of the story is quite highly developing, with sophisticated terms and on</td>
<td>Chinese modes of critical thinking conveyed through skilled use of language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>occasion the use of word play. Critical ideas are conveyed through ingenious, subtle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expression.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generation of particular Chinese modes of critical thinking is shown through further analysis of the novel in Chapter Five. These modes of critical think also provide conceptual insights for analysing critical performance of students from China in academic fields that are largely defined in English in terms of Western critical thinking (see Chapter Six).
4.5.2 Interviews

Interviews are essential sources of information in the present case study. Its open-ended nature allowed me to ask my interviewees about facts of a matter as well as their ideas about the matter, following Yin’s (2014) suggestion to ask a respondent to put forward personal insights into certain circumstances and use such information as a basis to enquire further (p. 84).

The interviews were conducted under the guidance of the interviewer, where there were open-ended questions that were not in any fixed order (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). This type of interview does not need a fixed protocol, because what is expected from interviewees is in-depth insight into the topic that goes beyond direct observations. Hence the interviews were spontaneous, loosely structured, and conducted in an informal conversational style. I took it upon myself to change the wording of any question according to the circumstances in order. This allowed a degree of freedom and adaptability in acquiring information from a respondent, for I positioned myself as not making prior assumptions about the topic, inviting the respondent to feel at ease in providing a personal point of view (Yin, 2014, p. 85).

This approach did however lead to a problem, because the flexibility in wording could lead to different responses from different persons to essentially the same question. To avoid this, the study employed a semi-structured interview methodology, involving ‘prepared questioning guided by identified themes in a systematic manner interposed with probes designed to elicit more elaborate responses’ (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p.246). A series of broad themes and emergent insights were incorporated into each interview, while conversation was also directed towards the topic and issues the interviewer wanted to talk about. This semi-structured interview approach touched on all the key questions while enabling me to respond sensitively to differences in ways the interviewees interpreted the topic (Qu & Dumay, 2011). This methodology emphasised the need to approach the topic from an interviewee perspective while producing a fabric of complex interpersonal conversations. Recording devices were available to provide more accurate rendition of the interviews, and significant conversations were recorded, except where an interview either refused permission for recording or appeared uncomfortable in the presence of recording equipment.
Rather than using focus groups, each participant was interviewed individually to ensure that the study achieve depth in understanding participants’ understanding and perspectives. To consider a typical Chinese cultural habit, I considered that placing a group of participants at one table would be likely to make them reluctant to express themselves more openly. Thus the study in effect built a picture of relationships one by one for the sake of achieving a better overall response towards the research topic.

To respond to research focus and research questions, participants with particular characteristics were selected to serve the purpose of this case study.

4.5.2.1 Participants

An appropriate research scope may be as important as the research focus itself: to draw in experience from ‘a set of social contexts’ that is too widely selected, findings may present ‘a scattering of unrelated snapshots’ rather than defined conclusions (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 26). Thus in line with the purpose of the case study, the research scope identified the group of postgraduate student participants. These students possessed knowledge and experience in relation to the topic, and they were also the ones the research expected to benefit. Considering factors of feasibility and accessibility, the study recruited potential participants from postgraduate students with whom I was able to communicate: from Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, China; and Western Sydney University in Sydney, Australia (see table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Criteria for recruitment of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Characteristics relevant to aims of study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chinese postgraduate students from Zhejiang University</td>
<td>Postgraduate students with a major in Humanities, especially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=6)</td>
<td>education</td>
<td>of Chinese modes of critical thinking and engagement of such thinking in their research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese international postgraduate students from Western Sydney University (n=12)</td>
<td>Chinese international postgraduate students in Australia with a major in education</td>
<td>This group of participants have knowledge of Chinese modes of critical thinking and experience of research in Education in an Australian-educational environment. The group was recruited to investigate their understanding of Chinese modes of critical thinking and engagement of such thinking in their research. Further, changes in understanding after beginning studies in Australia were addressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research educator, Group 1 (n=3)</td>
<td>Research educators of Group 1 students</td>
<td>This group of participants have experience in educating/supervising Chinese research students. They have monitored these students’ research work and were expected to comment on their uses of critical thinking, and provide feedback on such matters. The group’s insights were analysed in relation to the insights of their students. Out of their expertise, further analysis was enabled of how Chinese modes of critical thinking work and were treated or valued under different circumstances in research education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research educators of group 2 (n=2)</td>
<td>Research educators of Group 2 students</td>
<td>This group of participants have experience in educating/supervising Chinese international research students in an Australian educational environment. They have monitored these international students’ research work and indicated their critical thinking performance, and provided feedback. The group’s insights, which were also analysed in relation to their students’ insights, enabled valuable further analysis and exploration not only of engagement in Chinese modes of critical thinking, but also of a potential theoretical pedagogical framework based on</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6 Data analysis

Evidentiary data play an important role in confirming, revising, or discrediting existing categories, arguments or reasons and in guiding their renewed development (Odom, et al., 2005). The aim of data analysis is to arrive at an understanding of the topic ‘expressed in terms of a general statement about variations and patterns that have been noted within data and ... checked against individual empirical instances’ (Beach, 2009, cited in Douglas, 2014, p.54). Ultimately the challenge is to cumulative individual elements into an integral whole (Strauss, 1987, cited in Douglas, 2014).

Identifying counter-evidence and potential counter-arguments may be as significant as locating patterns. The data analysis procedure reveals the usefulness of research findings in illuminating the research questions and their central role in interpreting the educational issues under investigation.

It is the researcher who provides explanations and analysis of the data, then identifies patterns and connections and a logically coherent picture. There are always potential connections to be made between multiple sources of data (see Table 4.3 below), but in order to achieve a well-informed empirical analysis, the conceptual tools provided by various abundant scholarly works (see Chapters Two & Three) are used to identify ideas in accordance with evidence and develop a theoretical framework.

The case study employed interactive data analysis between evidence collected in different stages. Concepts relating to Chinese mode of critical thinking were first drawn from the textual artefact; subsequently interview data from students and their supervisors were examined to detect any influence from Chinese modes of critical thinking on their learning, research and teaching experience. Concepts generated from the first stage of the research informed the interview questions and were tested
as analytical tools for the interview data. Findings and concepts interacted to form a developing conceptual framework.

Table 4.3: Principles and actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data analysis principles</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analysis should show that it relied on all the relevant evidence</td>
<td>Exhaustive analytic strategies used to ensure the analysis is thorough, comprehensive and complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis should include all major rival interpretations</td>
<td>Counter-evidence identified, counter-arguments sought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis should address the most significant aspect of the case study</td>
<td>Key research findings presented, most significant issues addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher’s own prior, expert knowledge should be brought to the case study.</td>
<td>A conceptual framework continuously under development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6.1 Developing a conceptual framework

The conceptual framework as it develops in the course of the project from Chapter Three, and is embodied in the thesis, is the basis of a claim to an original contribution to knowledge. Chapters Five to Seven provide the specific tools for conceptual analysis of the data, and Chapter Eight consolidate the claim to an original contribution.

4.6.2 Data coding

In this study, coding is an analytical step that aims to organise data—essentially text of the novel and interview transcriptions—to make sense of it. Categories are identified in the form of codes for ‘allocating units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information’ compiled (Basit, 2003, p.144). These codes can represent...

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8 adapted from Yin, 2014, pp.202-204
straightforward categories or complex metaphorical ones; they can emerge from
direct evidentiary quotation, concepts drawn from the literature, or researcher
categorisation. The codes employed in this study may be divided into three
functional types: identifying codes; codes that categorise themes; and
conceptualising codes, as set out in Table 4.4 below.

In the stage of analysis, coding progressively transforms raw data into conceptual
categories. As analysis proceeds, similarities and differences emerge between
separate groups of data, ‘indicating areas of consensus in response to the research
questions and areas of potential conflict’ (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p.89).
Coding discovers patterns in the data, triggering ‘the construction of a conceptual
scheme’ (Basit, 2003, p.144) that assists in asking questions, making comparisons
across data, and constructing theory (Qi, 2015).

Analytical approaches will vary to suit each individual project (Patton, 2002. p.433).
Given the flexible research design of the present study, coding methods have been
selected ‘before, during, and/or after an initial review of the data corpus’ (Saldaña,
2009, p.48) to apply to emergent conditions.

The reverberative nature of coding—comparing data to data, data to code,
code to code, code to category, category to category, category back to
data, etc.—suggests that the qualitative analytic process is cyclical rather
than linear. (Saldaña, 2009, p.45).

This study has thus used multiple coding cycles of coding to cover the various
categories explored, to support the developing conceptual framework and to enhance
the credibility of the emerging argument. Table 4.4 outlines the coding methods used
and the outcomes achieved.

Table 4.4: Selection of coding methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cycle</th>
<th>Coding method</th>
<th>Brief description</th>
<th>Outcomes of coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IDENTIFYING</td>
<td>Descriptive coding (Saldaña,</td>
<td>Summary of basic topic of an evidentiary</td>
<td>Became familiar with data through tentative codes. These codes extracted directly from evidentiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009; Leech &amp; Onwuegbuzie, 2007</td>
<td>excerpt</td>
<td>quotes, literature, and researcher’s summary. The coding cycle created a basic inventory of concepts, initially very and/or used in final conceptual frameworks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open coding (Strauss &amp; Corbin, 2004)</td>
<td>‘Breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising data’ in a word or phrase (p. 303)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pattern coding (William, 2011)</td>
<td>Data reduced by assembling key codes into meaningful themes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categorising most relevant themes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused coding (Saldaña, 2009)</td>
<td>Developing major themes as categories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axial coding (Saldaña, 2009; Bernard &amp; Ryan, 2010)</td>
<td>Integrate and cross-checking central categories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptualising</td>
<td>All codes and categories systematically linked</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical coding (Saldaña, 2009)</td>
<td>Codes, categories, &amp; themes re-labelled, refined and developed into a more abstract conceptual framework. Generated concepts translated &amp; synthesised into meaningful units to create a theory grounded in the evidence generated through the study.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The coding process for the interview transcripts strictly followed the above procedure. However for operational reasons, before its first open coding cycle the
material of the novel underwent one further categorising cycle, where the most relevant sections and paragraphs informing the research questions were identified. After the reduction of the amount of data\(^9\), the three coding cycles were carried out with the selected text material. The combination of coding methods showed in table 4.3 helped to make sense of the data in relation to the researched issues. Conceptualised analytical points emerging after various cycles of data coding were ready to be tested against critique of the literature, to be considered in the context of theoretical innovation.

This study aimed to use the data to verify Rancière’s (1991) educational presupposition of *intellectual equality* with regard to postgraduate research students from China studying in Anglophone universities as they manifest and engage Chinese modes of critical thinking. The key concepts and insights extracted in the coding process relate closely to the nature of Chinese modes of critical thinking, demonstration of intellectual inequality, verification of intellectual equality, and engagement of Chinese modes of critical thinking in the educational context under investigation. Other unexpected concepts were also captured during the process. Data coding helped to analyse the evidence into small discrete units and then to create meaningful connections between them. The following section explains how analysis writing guided the placement of these small discrete units in the analytical frame of the study.

### 4.6.3 Analysis writing

Analysis writing has contributed significantly to the study’s presentation of argument and the logical linking of data, concepts, literature and explanation. As patterns were sought during data coding, analysis writing focused on excerpt-commentary unit

\(^9\) Data reduction helped moderate data overload and kept analysis in line with the research questions. This was significant because this study involves analysis of seven volumes of literature work with a particular focus. Data reduction occurred before, during, and after the data analysis, as an analytical strategy embedded in the process of coding, data display, verification of findings and report writing. Data reduction ‘sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards, and organises data in such a way that “final” conclusions can be drawn and verified’ (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.11). Data reduction, which has continued until the completion of the final report, has implications for decisions on research focus and questions, theoretical underpinnings and methods of data generation.
analysis, which aims to identify ideas through detailed commentary on specific excerpts (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011, p.185), and possibly ‘generate new insights and usually uncovered patterns’ (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p.131). Excerpt-commentary unit analysis can link striking concepts of interest in academic literature. It is an approach that explains to readers what the researcher wants them to understand about the evidence.

The following steps were followed in excerpt-commentary unit analysis in the case study (Singh, 2014):

1. Selection of evidentiary excerpts from the novel and interview coded data sets.
2. Identification of a key concept for each selected excerpt.
3. Conceptual commentary after the excerpt, questioning and defining key concepts and considering alternative explanations for what has been reported.
4. Writing a conceptual introduction to each evidentiary excerpt, focusing on the key concept in the analysis.
5. Writing an orienting sentence to connect this concept with a description of the evidentiary excerpt.
6. Employing direct quotations from the literature to define key concepts and critique key ideas.

The analysis writing method followed principles of data analysis (Table 4.3). In the process conceptual points generated through data coding were closely cross-checked with direct evidentiary quotations, and evidence and counter-evidence were identified. Ideas were also tested against the literature. Arguments and counter-arguments were generated and compared. The whole body of relevant evidence was reconsidered in terms of data-data, data-literature, and literature-literature relationships; the argument explicitly isolated main rival interpretations and significant features of the case study. My own prior specialist knowledge was

10 Also known as ‘evidentiary conceptual unit analysis.’
mobilised to further my argument through the whole process of analysis and analysis writing.

Excerpt-commentary unit analysis writing then focuses on the logical flow of argument. Criteria of ‘length, relevance, readability, comprehensibility’ established the relevance of excerpts, while conceptual commentaries established relevance to the research problem, so that each excerpt-commentary unit was part of ‘a progression of ideas to deepen understanding’ (Li, 2012, p.133).

In analysis writing, data display is an important tactic for efficient data analysis and presentation.

**4.6.4 Data display**

Data display creates a systematic visual format for information from which users can efficiently draw conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Meng, 2012, p.125). The case study tradition of inquiry strongly encourages the use of strategic data display showing major connections between analytical points (Verdinelli & Scagnoli, 2013). This thesis has directly quoted individual evidentiary excerpts from the novel and from interviews as well as setting out tables and figures for compact representation of the body of evidence.

**4.6.5 Validation of findings and conclusions**

Through the varied course of coding cycles, selected data were condensed into manageable comparable analytical units which were processed in terms of excerpt-commentary unit analysis. This section specifies methods used to generate and validate findings (see Table 4.5 below).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Explanations</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clustering</td>
<td>Grouping conceptual points into more general categories through aggregation and comparison</td>
<td>Coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Producing a higher level of abstraction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Involving iterative interaction between first level data and more general categories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noting relations between variables</td>
<td>Detecting relations between conceptual points through creating matrices.</td>
<td>Coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishing relations between conceptual points through critical thinking</td>
<td>Analysis writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comparing rival interpretations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring conceptual coherence</td>
<td>Establishing key findings</td>
<td>Coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relating findings to evidence</td>
<td>Analysis writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identifying corresponding issues in literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishing a coherent connection between data and concepts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking meaning of outliers</td>
<td>Identifying and tracking outliers.</td>
<td>Coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seeking information on the meaning of outliers</td>
<td>Analysis writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking for researcher effects</td>
<td>Identifying and minimising the researcher effects on the case</td>
<td>Obtaining feedback on findings from supervisors and colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identifying the effects of the case on the researcher</td>
<td>Obtaining feedback on findings from other academics through attending</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Validation or verification of findings and drawing conclusions in case study is a process of deriving meaning from the data and confirming that the process of generation of meaning generated is ‘valid, repeatable and right’ (Miles & Huberman, 1994, cited in Qi, p.62). Table 4.5 shows that the methods consist in actions that were carried out. These actions are the vehicle for escalating data analysis ‘from descriptive to explanatory, and from concrete to conceptual and abstract’ (Miles & Huberman, cited in Qi, 2015, p.62).

4.6.6 Report writing

Report writing is the creative yet critical process of weaving a coherent overall story out of specific analyses of fragmentary data. (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011). Writing this thesis is hopefully an ‘opportunity to make a significant contribution to practice’ in the research field (Yin, 2014, p.177). The thesis has a clear focus that specifies its purpose; it develops through reference to what the evidence reveals and what the research literature says about the subject (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In aiming to make an original contribution to knowledge, the thesis embodies my perceptions of the educational issues investigated, and my views of the theoretical resources I brought into the discussion. In the study, ‘most significant areas’ of research were areas where the data were abundant and the conceptual points were most relevant to the research questions; and these were also the areas where the most unexpected data and arguments emerged.

Chapter One was the last to be finalised (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), on the principle that this may support the discovery of an ‘open attitude toward the data analysis and
the formulation of [the] thesis argument’ (Meng, 2012, p.128). The introductory background is necessary to understand the importance of the research focus; the study needed to be clearly delimited so as to set boundaries for the research focus and the generalisability of the outcomes. Chapter One directly and succinctly tells readers what I am writing about and what not: the big picture. Chapter One also provides an overview of the following seven chapters.

The argument developed in the thesis takes its direction from the research background and empirical study that are presented. Chapters Two to Four explain my commitment to a rigorous methodological path that begins with a thorough literature review and leads to the careful formulation of research questions and objectives. That methodological path implies ‘dedication to formal and explicit procedures’ (Yin, 2014, p.3).

The thesis report is documented with data that illustrate and substantiate the analysis. Chapters Five to Seven are evidentiary chapters: each relates directly to the research focus, and each one answers one of the research questions. The evidence adduced in each of the evidentiary chapters forms a pillar of the argument of this study. These evidentiary chapters record where this study comes from and so has helped me to see clearly where it is going (Yin, 2014, p.196).

The concluding chapter revisits the research problem, lighting up the significance of each of the key findings to. The chapter considers each of the findings in the context of the relevant research question, providing a critical exposition of the findings in the context of the discipline, through linking them to the research literature. Here I define my original contributions to knowledge. In the concluding chapter, the case study and my story come to an end, and I talk about what I have learnt in the study, noting limitations of the project research and making future recommendations regarding what I can do and what might otherwise be done in the light of the present research. The case study has come to an end; I have talked about what I have learnt in this study.
4.7 Conclusion to Chapter Four

This chapter has discussed issues relating to the research methodology and justifies research methods used in the case study. It empowers the research project with means and opportunities to investigate Chinese modes of critical thinking as a verification of intellectual equality (Rancière, 1991). Educational research is recognised as a particular type of ‘hard science.’ My ontological and epistemological positions are addressed. My ‘dual identity’ as researcher is made explicit. The need for this research to be a case study is discussed. This chapter also justifies and describes the flexible research design for the case study, along with the procedures for data collection, analysis, display and writing. Ethical issues are addressed. Approaches to validation of findings and writing reports have been explained.
CHAPTER FIVE
EXPLORING CHINESE MODES OF CRITICAL THINKING

5.1 Introduction

This chapter responds to the research question of how to verify intellectual equality (Rancière, 1991) through Chinese modes of critical thinking, with regard to postgraduate research students from China. The chapter first reveals examples of intellectual assets that are available for use as resources, recalling that Chapter Two noted resources of critical knowledge embodied in their historical and cultural heritage that students from China can use to stimulate their capacity for critical thinking (Peterson, 1979; Tong & Zhou, 2002; Bell, 2008), with possibilities for engaging such knowledge and skills into literary writing (Xin, 2007; Guo, 2007) and academic writing (Meng, 2012; Qi, 2015). Against the background of scholarly work that has been carried out, this study takes up an initiative to approach Chinese modes of critical thinking through an analysis of contemporary popular culture referring the language used by postgraduate students from China.

This chapter identifies Chinese modes of critical thinking already pictured in contemporary cultural representations through reference to a novel entitled The Empresses of the Palace: Zhen Huan Zhuan (Liu Lianzi, 2007). It explores modes of critical strategy engaged by protagonist Zhen Huan. The chapter introduces the ingredient of a metaphorical concept of stranger fig mode of critical thinking to measure against the critical perspectives and practices of students from China, and provides examples of students’ employment of Chinese modes of critical thinking. In doing this, it reports on theoretical merits of the strangler fig mode of critical thinking and its obstructive effect on study in an Australian educational environment.
This chapter employs the following theoretical concepts discussed in Chapter Three: \textit{the institution} (Boltanski, 2011), \textit{ordinary critique} (Boltanski, 2011), and the \textit{monolingual paradigm} (Yildiz 2012).

5.2 ‘The Death of the Author’

The purpose of this chapter and what is expected to come out of it focus on neither the plot of \textit{The Empresses of the Palace} nor its themes; rather this investigation approaches the novel with an enquiry regarding modes of critical thinking, where it expects to produce meanings.

A text can yield a great deal of information about the social context of its author and its readers, yet the notion of the social context it conveys can be received and interpreted differently from the author’s original intention. Roland Barthes (1915-1980) in his 1977 essay ‘The Death of the Author’ addresses the question of the power of an author, the power of the audience, and the option to pay less attention to the background of a work than to the work itself. Barthes wrote subsequently:

To give a text an author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing…refusing to assign a 'secret,' an ultimate meaning, to the text (and the world as text), liberates what may be called an anti-theological activity, an \textit{activity that is truly revolutionary} since to refuse to fix meaning is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases - reason, science, law… A text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal: the reader is without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that \textit{someone} who holds together \textit{in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted}. (Barthes, 1977, pp.147-148).

If this reasoning is followed, the author cannot claim any absolute authority over his or her text. Instead, since a text is drawn from many places and combined into one entity, its focus must be on the reader not the author. Within this remit, a reader is empowered with multidimensional potential to add to, alter, or simply edit the message carried by the text. Thus ‘The Death of the Author’ is an argument that rejects the linear narrative of ‘the genius author’ in favour of ‘an impersonal instance
of inscription’ (Watkin, 2015, p.33); in its place a new narrative surfaces through what the readers make of the text. In fact the ‘death of the author’ might be understood as ‘the rebirth of the author’ (Rombes, 2005). Thus readers might give a text second life through making sense of it, and in the process become new authors.

In Liu Lianzi’s 2007 novel *The Empresses of the Palace*, Zhen Huan is a concubine who gradually changes from an innocent and vulnerable young girl to a powerful scheming woman. In hierarchically governed archaic institution of the imperial palace, concubines need to compete with each other and even eliminate their opponents in order to raise their relative power status and attain the privileges dispensed by the Emperor. Zhen Huan finds herself caught up in infighting among the concubines and learns to defend herself. Using her talents and employing her own wiles, Zhen Huan carefully plots and intrigues her way through to winning the affection of the Emperor. Ultimately she attains unparalleled power and the position she has sought. She has rid herself of all her enemies. Yet in the world of the Palace, Zhen Huan has very few true friends and little love.

In creating the characterisation and the plot of the narrative, author Liu Lianzi not only implies criticism of the institution of the imperial palace, but also creatively develops a unique approach to transform the power of the status quo. By doing so, she explicitly engineers a subtle strategy that applies a mode of critical thinking in relation to the imperial institution, a strategy which might be translated into model that could transform a more broadly conceived institutionalised reality.

How does the author want her readers to perceive the story experiencing the life of *Zhen Huan*? She states her expectation through an interview:

Different people interpret the novel from different perspectives. It is seen alternatively as a novel descriptive of the palace or a workplace; a critical realist novel; or simply a romantic novel. However, I want my audience to realise from my work that the most important things are not wealth and power, but inner resources, kindness, genuine friendship, kinship and love - the things she lost in the process. In the end Zhen Huan does not really have anyone to communicate with, especially after she attains ultimate power status. *Zhen Huan’s* victory is not the main theme of this novel; on the contrary, I want this to be a work of criticism and humanity. I hope that women in the workplace will not value it for its superficial...
elements, and will not see its strategies and plots as ‘techniques’ to pursue power and influence (Bao, Y., 2012).

It needs to be noted that the author has a predominantly critical view of Zhen Huan’s ‘techniques’ transform her institutional power status. These schemes bring wealth and power through the sacrifice of kindness, friendship, kinship and love. Yet it is these ‘techniques’ that attract the attention of most readers. Media reports show that such skills critical to survival are perceived by audiences as a habit of mind that can inform their attempts to achieve success in a hierarchically organised environment (Bao, Y., 2012; Bao, W., 2012). Published books have considered Zhen Huan’s strategies as guides to struggle against dominance in fulfilment of personal goals (Jin & Gao, 2012; Luo, 2013). Baidu Post Bar\(^{12}\) is filled with posts on how such critical techniques can be applied to real life contexts. It appears that despite the intention of Liu Lianzi to question and disapprove of the strategic critical techniques she describes her audiences have made use of these modes of critical strategy to inform their practice. In this sense, the author has no control over the way her text is to be interpreted: the readers create new meanings and potentials for the text.

In a comparable way, the present study deliberately fastens on the techniques Liu Lianzi criticises, to represent a Chinese mode of critical thinking. Here it is necessary to ask, is this study interpreting and making use of the story against the author’s will?

Barthes (1977) argues that ‘the true locus of writing is reading’ (p. 148). In line with his discussion of ‘The Death of the Author,’ this study argues that it is not the author of the text that matters most, but the readers who test their ideas in the public domain and deliver testimony beyond the ken of narrow predictable judgements. In her story Liu Lianzi (2007) aims to reveal critical ‘techniques,’ but she criticises these techniques. She promotes kindness and genuine interpersonal relationships. However, in the story, these happen to be the very features that are abandoned in the struggle

\(^{12}\) Baidu Tieba 百度贴吧 ‘Baidu Post Bar’ links users with an online query-based searchable online community to exchange views and share knowledge and experiences. It is one of the biggest online communities because it is tied to the Baidu, China’s largest search engine. For more information about posts regarding to the discussion about Zhen Huan’s mode of critical techniques, see: http://tieba.baidu.com/f?ie=utf-8&kw=%E5%90%8E%E5%AE%AB%E7%94%84%E5%AC%9B%E4%BC%A0
for power to combat the extremes of the institutionalised reality. The contradictions that remain unsolved by the author’s licence as she hints at non-linear ways of reading her texts have unpredictably opened possibilities for readers to engage in exploring multidimensional paths for themselves.

The intervention of a textual artefact devoted to the construction of the social injust seems required by the critical actors. As was shown above, the intertextual references formed critical debates between the author and readers, readers and readers. The complex interplay that is highlighted around the novel of Zhenhuan Zhuan presents a disputation which develops the understanding of its metaphorical theme, plot, characterisation and sociocultural knowledge. Along with new critical actors continuously add their new insights to this critical debate, the text put into the debate no longer belongs to its authors (here the author could be the authors of the novel, and the authors who intrigued by and interpreted the novel). Such a critical debate then spells out a nuanced, transformed sensation. It weaves together ‘a new sensory fabric by wrestling percepts and affects from the perceptions’ that make up the fabric of ordinary critical thinking (Rancière, 2009, p. 56). Yin (2014) argues the linguistic, cultural, conceptual and imaginative resources bring together to a certain form of body of knowledge can serve as intellectual resources, indicating the critical dynamic that is at play in this particular context. Bailin and colleagues (2010) are convinced that the critical thinking presented by cultural artefact, in this case, the novel, mirrors and may strike new exploration of the appropriate use of the linguistics, concepts, standards, stratagems and procedures this culture has developed. In this sense, Critical thinking is both the ‘output’ and the starting point of linguistic expressions, which reflect and articulate human reasoning within a specific context.

Mindful of the multiple layers of intertextual interference contained in this textual artefact, this study negotiates meanings of the text as it in turn proceeds to inquire into the modes of critical thinking reflected in Zhen Huan’s struggle for power.
5.3 Critical thinking reflected in the power struggle

The research investigates modes of critical thinking mainly through analysing Zhen Huan’s power strategies. *The Empresses of the Palace* constructs an extreme environment in which every concubine needs to win the heart of the emperor. Every woman ‘faces the same institution - the absolute authority of the emperor… and the hierarchy of different concubines’ (Shi, 2012, p.89). The story reflects a twisted power relationship where individuals compete and even battle with others to gain privileges to survive, to live within a dominant patriarchal sphere. There is the dynamic flow of institutional power. Although the novel may exaggerate the extent of patriarchal control, there is little doubt that the story of Zhen Huan’s critical institutional metamorphosis captures situations visible in the real world. Thus stories like *The Empresses of the Palace* address an ‘inevitable issue’ when they interpret the values of contemporary society’ (Sun, 2012, p. 27).

‘Power relations within the social and historical context’ may be said to construct the lived experience that is a basis for critical theory (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 130). Critical perspectives are needed to recognise nature of power in relation to unjust and oppressive social conditions (Cannella & Lincoln, 2015, p. 244). In order to interpret and finally transform social dominance, critical thinking needs to be directed at power relations.

Written in the first person, *The Empresses of the Palace* is the story of Zhen Huan from her own standpoint. It presents an interpersonal perspective on how she is pressured by the institution of the palace, and how she actively transforms it. The next section maps Zhen Huan’s modes of critical thinking in her struggle for power.

5.4 Mapping Zhen Huan’s modes of critical thinking

For the purpose of the study, this section specifically focuses on the most prominent pieces of evidence of critical thinking by Zhen Huan collected from the novel.
5.4.1 Mode 1: Make use of vulnerability

Being called to be a concubine in the palace was the most significant point in Zhen Huan’s life. It changed everything. She had to leave her parents and live cautiously in the enclosed world of the palace, depending on her own devices. She had to confront the firmly entrenched administrative and personal hierarchy, and find her own ways to derive power in order to protect herself against exploitation. The author describes Zhen Huan at this time in terms of the Emperor’s evaluation:

柔桡嬛嬛，妩媚姌嫋。（Vol I, p. 4）

Soft and graceful, charming yet vulnerable.

This is the very first impression the new concubine presents to this patriarchal driven institution. She learns the risks for herself:

后宫之人嫉妒暗算。[我]若再以才智相斗，恐怕徒然害了自身…若是明日…被选中侍寝受到皇帝宠爱以致频频有人在背后暗算，那可真是防不胜防…万一我圣眷优渥危及她（华妃）的地位，岂不是要成为她眼中钉肉中刺，必欲除之而后快。（Vol I, p. 5, p. 17）

The concubines in Palace stab each other in the back out of jealousy, if [I] fight them with talent and wisdom, [I] would hurt [myself]… If I were chosen by the Emperor and gained his affection, people would plot to attach me behind my back. Such attacks would be impossible to defend against effectively. If I were to gain a glorious reward from the Emperor, I would threaten her [Hua Fei’s13] power status. Then I would be a thorn in her flesh and she would definitely eliminate me.

Zhen Huan understands that if she attracts attention, she will attract jealousy and so be attacked. Since her fate is determined, to be a concubine, she decides to continue as a weak person and give as consistent impression of detached acceptance, rather than becoming competitive, often to the point of aggression, like other concubines:

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13 Hua Fei is the second most powerful among the concubines, second only to the Empress in rank in the Palace.
凡事自会讲求分寸，循规蹈矩……收敛锋芒……女儿也不求能获得圣上宠眷，但求无波无浪在宫中了此一生，保住甄氏满门和自身性命即可。(Vol I, p. 5).

I will not be carried away in anything, I will play by the rules… I will draw in my claws… I do not pray for emperors' love, I only pray for a peaceful life in the palace, and preserve my family and myself.

As a new concubine, Zhen Huan knows that she faces many uncertain risks and potential enemies. At this stage she knows that her power is too weak to challenge the dominant concubines, and disobedience is totally out of the question. But Zhen Huan does not hide her weakness, rather, she emphasises it. She tries to send a message of being weak and hence harmless. To do so she even feigns sickness:

温实初的药很快就到了，小印子煎了一服让我睡下。次日起病发作得厉害…病情一传出，宫中人在背后笑话我，无不以为我貌美如花却胆小如鼠，是个中看不中用的绣花枕头…人们在争斗中也渐渐淡忘了我这个患病的贵人。 (Vol I, p. 18).

Doctor Wen’s medicine was provided very quickly. Xiao Yin Zi cooked it and I drank it. The sickness becomes serious the next day… When the word of my sickness spread, everyone in the palace laughed about me behind my back. They all think that despite my beauty, I am just a coward, just a useless embroidered pillow… Gradually those engaging in power struggle have forgotten me, the sickly concubine.

Indeed her expression of the weakness brings a period of peace for Zhen Huan. This prevents her from being harmed by those of higher rank and her competitors since they do not sense a strong threat in her. Also, she uses this time to learn to stand on own her feet and test her servants’ loyalty. Thus in this time of weakness, she manages to establish a trustworthy foundation of personal relationships that she will not need to be concerned about in the coming power struggle. Here she uses the image of vulnerability to create a break for herself from intensive confrontation with dominance, and creates power bases she can rely upon in the future. This outcome was well captured in the understanding of:

14 In the Chapter ‘百计避敌’ (Efforts to avoid the enemy), Zhen Huan senses that not all her servants are loyal to her. Her being ill affects the material gain of her chamber and in turn those who work there. She sends away the servants who have complained and keeps only the servants who are not motivated by profit but are loyal to her.
有时候不争，比能争会争的人有福多了。(Vol II, p. 21).

Sometimes you are better off when you are not competing, much better off than those who compete.

Whether intentionally or not, Zhen Huan’s vulnerability becomes her shelter, and even an advantage in the game of power competition.

5.4.2 Mode 2: Attach onself to the powerful

The story stated that wealth, honour and even life are not for the palace concubines to decide. In the harsh alternating power struggles, Zhen Huan at first does not have the power to protect herself, let alone her family. Therefore, she played vulnerable and harmless. However, she is still caught up in the infighting because she wants to help her friends. In this situation where her power status is still low yet she has to confront the oppression from sources of dominance, Zhen Huan needs to find powerful actors to depend on in order to protect herself:

在这后宫中，若想升，必须猜中皇上的心思，若想活，必须猜中别的女人的心思。(Vol I, p. 128).

In this palace, if you want to be promoted, you have to guess what the Emperor is thinking. If you want to live, you have to guess what other women are thinking (Italics added).

后宫中哪来的什么情同姐妹？不过是势弱依附势强，愚笨听从聪明。(Vol IV, p. 11).

There is no such thing as sisterhood in the palace. The weak attach to the powerful, the foolish listen to the wise (Italics added).


From now on, [I] am at the mercy of others. It is going to be hard to live... (Italics added).

It is ‘hard to live’, but in order to live, Zhen Huan has to be aware of the powerful competitors. A concubine has little chance to establish, maintain and increase her status independently unless she recognises the indicators of power in the institution.
Knowing this, Zhen Huan sees the necessity of attaching to someone from the higher end of the pyramid, so as to be assured of better protection.

The first and most important task of attaching to the powerful is to determine who are the power figures to whom one might attach oneself:

其实这后宫里头啊，从来就只有一棵树，只是乱花渐欲迷人眼罢了。
只要你看得清哪棵是树，哪朵是花就好了。（Vol I, p. 99）

In fact, in this palace, there is only one tree. Yet there are too many confusing flowers. You only need to see which is the tree and which are flowers.

如今势单力孤，强敌环伺…必要寻一颗足以挡风遮雨的大树了…我低头默默…“臣妾等身处后宫之中仰仗的是皇后的恩泽，能为皇后分忧解劳是臣妾等份内之事。”(Vol I, p. 99)

Now I am weak and alone, yet enemies are all around… [I] have to find a tree to give me shelter…I lower my head and keep quiet for a while: ‘Concubines like us live in the palace by the grace of the Empress. It is our responsibility to share the concerns and troubles of the Empress.’ (Italics added).

The ‘tree’ and ‘flower’ metaphor is an indirect reference to the play of power relationships in the palace. This power play does not always appear as a static linear quality but rather is normally exhibited as a multi-dimensional dynamic. The position of higher status in the power hierarchy is not occupied by a single concubine: different selections of alliance lead to different power relations, resulting in absorption into different power alignments. The palace is a special realm where the Emperor bestows power, and where the concubines on whom this power is bestowed live. So it is that the Emperor is at the summit of the scheme of power relations, and yet he maintains a distance from it. Competition and power struggles are almost exclusively an occurrence among women. As the story presents it, the concubines walk along a knife’s edge as they are drawn into the competitive struggle for power. Small slips could mean their life is destroyed. To find the proper ‘tree’ to which she can attach herself is crucial to give a concubine of low power status time and living space. The protection of the ‘tree’ does not have to be any particular action. In Zhen Huan’s case, it is ‘grace’ to live upon, in exchange for her loyalty to Empress. It is a choice to actively join the alliance of the Empress. On the one hand she attaches
herself to the Empress and enjoys the protection the Empress provides. On the other hand, she must ‘share the concerns and troubles of the Empress,’ to accord with the interests and principles of the Empress. The arrangement of this alliance is presented as follows: the lower concubines are obedient to the leader of the alliance, and the leader takes responsibility for the lower concubines. Once the alliance is well established, any entity within it can influence its future:

我苦苦一笑，黯然道：“……咱们已是一荣俱荣，一衰俱衰的命数了。”
(Vol I, p. 45).

I smile bitterly, and say sadly, ‘…Honour for one is honour for all, and decline for one is decline for all; this is our fate.’

This shows the strength of the connections within an alliance. Involved in an alliance with a powerful concubine, Zhen Huan shares the honour that initially belongs to someone else. This empowers her with privilege only bestowed upon concubines with much greater power status. The ‘tree’ markedly raises her power status. In the palace, power should come with promotion in rank, but in Zhen Huan’s case, attachment to the powerful Empress enables her to share in the honour of the Empress without promotion. Zhen Huan’s critical thinking embodied as crucial action in attaching to the Empress not only maintains protection for herself but enables her to absorb power without changing her actual power status.

5.4.3 Mode 3: Obedience-masked ambition

In the story, following the trajectory of her power struggle, Zhen Huan encounters deadly challenges. The Empress uses her in ways that she cannot forgive. Eventually she decides to take over power. Having experienced both a time of playing vulnerable and a time of being attached, Zhen Huan learns to endure even as her ambition mounts:

即使我恭顺，皇后对我也是心怀敌意，若我不恭顺，不啻与授人以柄……你要记得一句话，君子报仇，十年不晚。还有一句，路要一步一步走方能稳当，我实在没有本事能一口气板倒那么多人。（Vol V, p. 42)
Even if I appear to be obedient, the Empress will be a hostile opponent. If I appear not to be obedient, I am giving others the right [to destroy me]…You have to remember, for the noble person, revenge can be a matter of ten years. And also, to be secure, I must proceed step by step: it is simply not possible to overturn so many people just like that, in a moment.

Zhen Huan continues to maximise the advantage of apparent vulnerability. She pretends to be obedient, patiently awaits the opportunity to take over power from the Empress. She knows that to be a concubine with a certain power would attract attention that will being a compelling concubine attracts attention, which likely to create opportunities, if not excuses, for other concubines to destroy her. This strategy of Zhen Huan is extended through a comment made by a girl who serves Zhen Huan and is close to her:

在这宫中，有利用价值的人才能活下去，好好做一个可利用的人，安于被利用，才能利用别人。(Vol VII，p. 2).

Only useful people can survive in this palace. It is best to be someone that can be used, and who is willing to be used: only then will you be able to use others.

Only concubines who appear to be obedient and ‘willing to be used’ can survive to find opportunities to develop their own power and eventually to ‘use others.’ The expression of obedience secures Zhen Huan’s chance to carry out her ambition. The serving girl’s critical statement interrogates the boundaries between to ‘be used’ and ‘to use;’ between ‘obedient’ and ‘ambitious.’ Here Liu Lianzi presents an approach of using deceitful expression to achieve a manipulative outcome. Using this strategy to direct her thinking and conduct, Zhen Huan eventually takes over power from the Empress, the powerful woman to whom she became attached and finally, the woman whom she used.

Different techniques used by Zhen Huan provide instances for this study to enable interpretation in terms of modes of critical thinking. The next section contextualises her strategies in relation to concepts generated by Boltanski (2011).
5.5 Contextualise modes of critical thinking

Moving beyond the story of Zhen Huan, the critical thinking strategy she used to struggle and combat the institutionalised reality in palace can be understood in reference to Boltanki’s (2011) conceptual lens of *institution* and *ordinary critique*.

The institution confirms the ‘rules of acceptability’ (Boltanski & Thevenot, 2009, p. 360) so as to avoid conflict caused by an uncertain reality. In doing this, it assumes appropriate standards for handling issues. These standards lead to an oppressive restraint or even pressure on the ordinary people who operate in its sphere (Boltanski, 2011). However, these ordinary people - or preferably in this study, critical actors - informed through their own lived experience, can produce critique to transform the institutionalised reality. They can utilise the semantic security provided by the institution to establish pockets of critical thinking and critical practice to protect themselves from institutional pressure and challenge the dominance of the institution (Boltanski, 2011; 2013).

The palace power relationship structure can be seen as an institution with a strict hierarchy. It determines the rules of competition that every concubine needs to follow. These rules produce pressures to bear upon these women, who must behave accordingly. Zhen Huan herself starts as a concubine of low power status who tackles the rigorous power oriented dominance and eventually takes over power within it, her critical strategies providing an illustration of how critical actors and their critical thinking transform the institution (see table 5.1).
Table 5.1: Modes of critical thinking and their implications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modes of critical thinking</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Implications</th>
<th>Critical evolvement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make use of vulnerability</td>
<td>Acknowledging: recognise one’s own weakness, and use it to send message of being harmless. In doing this, protect oneself from intensive conflicts.</td>
<td>Awareness of the pressure of the institution (Boltanski, 2011) and operation according to its principles to avoid confrontation.</td>
<td>Enlightenment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attach to the powerful</td>
<td>Attaching: distinguish and determine a source of power, depend on that person and gradually share and absorb his/her power.</td>
<td>Becoming sensitive to the semantic security of the institution, and exploiting this security and practices within this domain to produce critique.</td>
<td>Empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obedience-masked ambition</td>
<td>Taking over: patiently wait, then finally take power away from the powerful host and use it to empower oneself.</td>
<td>Using the critique to transform the institution.</td>
<td>Emancipation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Zhen Huan’s actions foreshadow a critical procedure of becoming aware of the dominating and abusive characteristics of the institution, and then making use of its own characteristics against itself (Boltanski, 2011). Such a procedure can be seen as one combined mode of critical thinking, which has a feature of strong self-protection and ultimate goal of revolt. This mode of criticality can inform critical actors who are in an oppressive situation, giving them ways of working through dominance, without intensively and directly confronting it. In this sense, it can be related to serve the purpose of a critical emancipation.
5.6 Conceptualise modes of critical thinking

Zhen Huan’s mode or modes of critical thinking can be seen to interpret Boltanski’s prospect of institutional challenge in an alternative perspective. In order to better understand these resources and use them as analytical tools, it is important to conceptualise them in a wider dimension. This section has viewed Zhen Huan’s different modes of critical technique as one combined idea, showing how it evolves from the initial thought through various stages of innovation. Yet Zhen Huan’s mode of critical thinking could be seen as related to various possible approaches in life. The next sub-sections seek terms that may be used to include reference to her thinking strategies.

5.6.1 Machiavellianism?

Zhen Huan learns to survive on her own through unique, sometimes unscrupulous approaches to the institution. These approaches are developed and used to inform readers of alternative means to challenge the institution’s dominance and strategically achieve personal goals in various situations (Jin & Gao, 2012; Luo, 2013). However, the means she employs also attract criticism and cause concern. Shi (2012) argues that Zhen Huan’s manipulative methods provide negative guidelines for women who endorse these schemes in workplaces. Similarly, Ma (2012) is concerned about the increasing acceptance of these techniques that is shown online and in print. She feels that favour shown to Zhen Huan’s self-centred, unethical strategies reflects a ‘twist in human nature’ (p. 6). With particular reference to the particularly manipulative and self-interested features of Zhen Huan’s mode of critical thinking, media posts (Binggesay, 2016) and blogs (Wang, 2012) argue that this can be understood with in terms of Machiavellianism.

‘Machiavellianism’ is derived from the advice given by Niccolo Machiavelli to leaders to assist them ‘successfully negotiate the political labyrinth.’ It remains a debatable notion (Wiethoff, 1991, p.309). In Machiavelli’s 1515 work, The Prince, written for those who intend to ‘obtain the favourable attention of a prince,’ he
presents the features of principalities, and explains the methods of ruling the people and the army. Machiavelli separates himself from the population, including those seemingly faithful, and uses a distanced perspective to evaluate human nature.

In general men are ungrateful, inconstant, false, cowardly, and greedy. As long as you succeed, they are yours entirely... But when the need approaches, they turn against you. A prince who, relying entirely on their promises, has neglected other ways of protecting himself will be ruined. Therefore, a wise lord cannot, nor ought he, keep faith when such promises may be turned against him, and when the reasons that caused him to promise no longer exist... But it is necessary to know how to hide this characteristic well and to be a great pretender. People are so simple, and so subject to present necessities, that anyone who seeks to deceive will always find someone who will allow himself to be deceived... A prince should appear merciful, faithful, kind, religious, upright, but should be flexible enough to make use of the opposite qualities when it is necessary. (p. 26-28)

Machiavelli’s arguments derive from his disappointment with and distrust in humanity. They license leaders to deceive and makes use of their people.

Bereczkei et al. (2013) argue that Machiavellianism ‘refers to interpersonal strategies that advocate self-interest, deception, and manipulation’ (p. 108). A person who engages a Machiavellian approach is likely to exploit others through manipulative behaviour and less likely to be ‘concerned about other people beyond his or her own self-interest’ (Bereczkei et al., 2013, p. 108). A leader with Machiavellian sympathies will tend to deceive people and for his or her own ends without considering the risks for them. Wiethoff (1991) contends that the term Machiavellianism connotes ‘a cunning and deceitful expediency’ (p. 309). Chen & Chang (2012) categorise Machiavellian leaders as being able to ‘effectively balance pro-social and aggressive strategies to control resources for the individual pursuit of social status and material gains at the top of that hierarchy’ (p. 122). According to Bereczkei et al. (2013), Machiavellianism can be analysed into three main components:

(i) endorsement of deception and manipulation in interpersonal interactions, (ii) a cynical view of human nature (seeing others as weak and untrustworthy) and (iii) a disregard for conventional morality. (p. 53)
People leaning to Machiavellianism will have a tendency to be ‘callous, selfish and malevolent in their interpersonal dealings’ (Bereczkei et al., 2013, p. 53).

There may be features of Zhen Huan’s mode of critical thinking that can be seen in relation to Machiavellianism, as argued by Binggesay (2016) and Wang (2012). But whether the thinking strategy itself should be characterised as Machiavellianism needs to be considered from two sides. On one hand, Zhen Huan’s critical technique coincides with Machiavellianism in its egocentric and manipulative characteristics. A cynical perspective of human nature in the palace results in Zhen Huan’s tactics of making use of deceptive images - vulnerability and obedience - while abusing the advantages these images bring.

On the other hand, there is a big difference between Machiavelli and Zhen Huan in terms of their original power status. Machiavellian leaders occupy a high position in a hierarchy and apply top-down approaches as they make use of the people. They determine the controlling institution, and produce institutional pressure. However, Zhen Huan from a low power base begins to struggle against the dominant power, mostly using her own image. Oppressed by institutional pressure, she works to contest the institution, employing a bottom-up approach. These differences between Zhen Huan’s mode of critical thinking and Machiavellian techniques determine that the term Machiavellianism is not appropriate to describe her thinking strategy.

In the story, Zhen Huan uses the metaphor of a tree to describe the Empress, the embodiment of the institution. Here this study uses a plant - the strangler fig - as a metaphor to conceptualise her modes of criticality.

5.6.2 The strangler fig

The strangler fig (绞杀榕 jiǎoshāróng) is a tropical hemiepiphyte that vies for life in tropical and subtropical forests. It begins to grow when its seeds, likely carried by a bird, germinate in crevices on other trees (Zhou & Gilbert, 2003). Its seedlings use other trees as hosts. The fig puts out roots that attach to host trees to access their resources. The roots of the strangler fig form a cylinder around the host trees. Later,
the roots restrict the growth of the host by enveloping it, casting shade, and competing for water and nutrients (Putz & Holbrook, 1989, p. 781). The strangler fig may or may not ultimately replace its host tree (Okamoto, 2015). In situations where the original host tree dies, the clinging roots of the strangler fig become a trunk that remains standing on its own (Putz & Holbrook, 1989). This unique pattern of growth makes the strangler fig an advanced form of life in the plant world, because it has the means to indirectly attack powerful trees (Qi, Yan & Peng, 2007). The strangler fig starts out weak but uses an irregular strategy to survive in an extremely competitive forest. Sometimes it even eliminates its hosts in order to compete for resources, taking over their power to empower itself.

5.6.3 Strangler fig modes of critical thinking

The initially weak strangler fig’s roots grow down and envelop the host tree. The powerful host grows upwards towards the sunlit area above the forest canopy. At first the seemingly weak fig does not disturb the growth of the host tree, and the tree allows the fig to share its resources (Zeng, 2007). But sometimes, after a while, the strangler fig replaces the host tree. The ‘antagonistic interactions’ (Okamoto, 2015, p. 95) between strangler fig and its host are a metaphor that captures the essence of what Zhen Huan does in modifying the institution (see Figure 5.1).
Figure 5.1: Key features of the strangler fig mode of critical thinking

Three different modes of Zhen Huan’s critical thinking can be seen paralleling the three important stages of strangler fig’s growth. Zhen begins her power struggle from a vulnerable, dependent position. Like a tiny seed, she is not seen by any powerful entity as a threat. In order to obtain resources to protect herself, she attaches to a powerful host, the Empress. She absorbs and shares the privileges from her host to develop her own position. Finally, she empowers herself sufficiently to take over the power of the Empress, her host, and replace her in the hierarchy. With this threefold common pattern, this study describes Zhen Huan’s critical strategies in terms of ‘strangler fig modes of critical thinking.’

Thus in the study a ‘strangler fig mode of critical thinking’ refers to a dynamic criticality that begins from a weak position in a well-structured institution, and then attaches to the institution to protect itself from the institutional pressure through
following the principles of the institution. The critical dynamic then enjoys the power accorded by the institution as a reward for obedience. Finally the dynamic critical element empowers itself to challenge the injustice of the institution itself.

This ‘strangler fig mode of critical thinking’ has advantages:

1. A better initial base: since the fig grows in the host, it starts from an existing platform above the ground below.

2. Less confrontation: since the fig starts small and attaches to the host, it avoids direct confrontation and respects harmony. Its seemly vulnerable appearance lowers the host’s guard.

3. Favourable conditions in confrontation: since the fig is rooted deeply within the host and uses resources from the host to grow, it is seen as part of the host. This means that when the host need to confront the fig, it confronts part of itself.

In a real institutional situation, initiatives by critical actors and their critical opinions are enabled as they vie in a marginalised position of lower status, while seeking means to oppose the unfair pressure by the dominant power.

Zhen Huan’s strangler fig mode of critical thinking does evoke criticism of manipulative and deceptive features (sub-section 5.6.1). Yet no mode of critical thinking will be completely beyond criticism. The study has illustrated the risks and the advantages of strangler fig mode of critical thinking without either criticism or praise for this mode of critique per se. It is generated as a Chinese mode of critical thinking within contemporary Chinese popular culture; as a conceptual term it is available to inform and analyse perspectives and practices of students from China. The following section provides examples of students’ criticality, and tests them against Boltanki’s (2011) theoretical tools.
5.7 Examples of students’ Chinese modes of critical thinking

Boltanski (2011) argues that ordinary people - in this case study, critical actors - can produce critique to explain the social significance of everyday issues through reliance on their personal experience and knowledge. These ordinary critical actors need to be understood as being able to distance themselves from the ‘immediate practical context and critically reflect on it’ (Celikates, 2012, p. 160). Critical insights captured by Chinese words and phrases are expressed in interviews (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 provides a picture of critical competence on the part of ordinary students from China, moving beyond profiling that might neglect or reject their critical thinking capacity (Ochoa, 2013; Asmar, 2005; Clark & Gieve, 2006). The evidence shows that these interviewees are very conscious of the existence of institutions (Boltanski, 2011). They can identify different forms of institution and they can identify pressures created by institutions. In turn they produce quality modes of critical thinking to challenge the censor entity created by such dominance.

The understanding of institutional pressure has led these critical students to devise potential ways to transform problematic social issues into something they can manage. They are not satisfied with reflecting on static perspectives but want to maintain critical debate. Chen for example in her interview presents a nuanced perspective of Chinese modes of critical insights, through explaining their meanings and values, as well as problematising them. There must be a presupposition of the existence of these students’ critical capabilities if one is to ‘account for the way the members of a complex society criticise, challenge institutions, argue with one another, or converge toward agreement’ (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, p.15).
Table 5.2: Examples of Chinese modes of critical thinking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical insights</th>
<th>Evidentiary excerpt</th>
<th>Implication</th>
<th>Relation to strangler fig mode of critical thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>木秀于林 风必摧之</td>
<td>Chinese people have this saying: <strong>木秀于林 风必摧之</strong>. Originally we used this sentence to describe how easily extraordinary people can attract jealousy… Now we use this to dissuade others from being too different from the majority. (Aus-Tao)</td>
<td>Chinese critical actors are aware of institutional pressure and try not to forcefully present critical comments, to avoid crossing the boundaries determined by the institution (Boltanski, 2011); however, they take time to observe, develop sensitivity and carry out criticality through proper means.</td>
<td>Make use of the vulnerability: To present an innocuous appearance in order to avoid the uncertain consequences of confronting the institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>枪打出头鸟 Qiāng dǎ chū tóu niǎo, ‘The bird which sticks his neck out gets shot.’ (The nail that sticks up gets hammered down.)</td>
<td>Chinese people will still choose to be quiet or restrained when they face situations where they need to produce criticality. Because we are aware of the consequences. After all, why cause problems you might not be able to deal with? You can still think about it, but you have to carefully choose the time and the ways to make it visible… You need time to consider what serves your purpose best while protecting yourself. As we say, 枪打出头鸟. (Aus-Nan)</td>
<td>Chinese people are aware of</td>
<td>Attach to the powerful:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>中国式过马路</td>
<td>中国式过马路 is a false consciousness - as long as we have a certain</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 There may lack of consistency in the use of ‘you’ ‘we’ and ‘I’ as subject in these evidentiary excerpts. These direct quotations have been specifically selected from the transcript to serve the purpose of the analysis in the following section.
number of people who are crossing the road, it doesn't matter whether the traffic light is red. This consciousness is facilitated by the understanding of 法不责众 Fǎ bù zé zhòng – if many people are doing something, it can be done, even if it should not be done.

In fact since coming to Australia I see Western people 中国式过马路 Zhōngguó shì guò mǎlù, as well, but I guess people still call it 中国式 ‘Zhōngguóshì’ (the Chinese way) (bitter smile). Well I don’t know what they call it in English. I think a lot of things can be interpreted and criticized with the idea of 法不责众 Fǎ bù zé zhòng in social issues, educational issues, economic issues and so on. It is a useful analytical tool, but it should not be promoted as a behavioural principle. People should not consciously operate like that to get what they want… But I still don’t know how they interpret this in English. (Aus-Chen)

The law cannot be enforced when everyone is an offender.

We use critically tricky thinking. When we refer to China we sometimes say 大天朝 Dà tiān cháo. This phrase seems to be respectful, but we say it in a sarcastic way…It implies the egotist and stubborn aspect of our nation…but in the meantime, it is a big, positive word after all, so logically we can defend ourselves with its literal meaning. These three characters can present a lot of meanings and thinking beyond its surface.

…I wonder if we translate 大天朝 Dà tiān cháo to Australian fellow

Ordinary Chinese critical actors are aware of the pressure, if not censorship, produced by the political institution, and use strategic criticality to challenge such pressure, while keep the risk within a manageable region through negotiating semantic security.

Here the powerful are the mainstream. To do what the mainstream approve of brings convenience for the individual, even though the individual knows doing it is not right.

In this case, individual critical actors attach to the mainstream institution, in order to oppose principles determined by another institution characterised by ‘regularity’.

The strangler fig mode of critical thinking:

Emphasising non-dominant status through using respectful language. This attaches to and takes advantage of the semantic security entitled by the powerful institution, while posing a critique of this
students, whether they would think we are arrogant and ignorant. We would not use this word when talking to them, because they don’t have the context (to understand it) – and they are not interested in it anyway (Aus-Nan).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>以退为进 Yi tuì wéi jìn, ‘to retreat in order to advance; to gain advantage by making concessions’</th>
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<td>Chinese people engage in a lot of indirect critical thinking. Sometimes we will not present at the beginning what we most want to present. Sometimes we agree with an opponent, and exploit their argument so they start to make mistakes. This is Chinese adage of 以退为进 Yi tuì wéi jìn. Strategic retreat does not mean we yield. Patient waiting and ambitions are masked behind this retreat (Chi-Bao).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Obedience-masked ambition: To use an innocuous and obedient exterior to mask ambition. To endeavour to accumulate resources, waiting for the opportunity to advance.</td>
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<th>以退为进 Yi tuì wéi jìn</th>
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<td>I would like to think of Chinese modes of critical thinking as a way of 蓄力 Xù lì 蓄力. Zhen Huan sows the seed each time she makes a move to serve her purpose, so she can get opportunities to take the initiative in the future. We like to put the important point of our argument last. The point when it comes at the end connects everything that was revealed as a flow of argument… For example in a debate, a competitor will place most value on their opponents’ mistakes, and tried to turn their evidence, language and so on against to their</td>
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<td>Attach to the (opponent) host: Turns the opponents’ power against them. The more powerful they are the stronger challenge they receive. And an argument produced after this process would also</td>
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Ordinary critical actors produce critical strategies for expressing critical comments.
argument. After pointing out these mistakes, the competitor would start to establish his or her own idea and conclude with their side of argument... Because when you illustrating evidence, you may come up with new insights. All the process of presenting and analysing evidence is a way of xù lì 蓄力– storing the energy to make the final and most important punch. Every little detail is xù lì for the argument, and the more sufficient the accumulated power is, the more powerful can be the argument (Chi-e-Su).
The critical insights shown in the table, and the arguments by the students from and educators China, are however best captured in Chinese. Chen and Nan specifically identified the difficulty of translating the precise meaning of these Chinese critical ideas into English. Chen repeatedly said that she did not know how English speakers would talk about 中国式过马路 (Zhōngguóshí guò mǎlù, ‘Chinese ways of crossing the road’). This implied that she would be interested in introducing such Chinese phrases to her Australian counterparts, though as ‘analytical tools’ rather than as a cultural stereotype of Chinese people. Mentioning that Anglophones still called the less ethical way of crossing the road as ‘Chinese way’, she had to smile: affirming this as ‘Chinese’ in a negative context made this student uncomfortable. She proposed a mild critical comment towards this labelling of Chinese people, and proposed alternative ways of using these expressions as theoretical aids to help exploring ‘social issues, educational issues and economical issues’ in Chinese and Australian contexts. Despite this intention, Chen still struggled to engage these valuable Chinese linguistic and theoretical resources in English. On the other hand, Nan directly stated that he would not use the concept of 大天朝 (Dà tiān cháo ‘the heavenly dynasty’) in an Australian context because he considered his Australian peers were not interested in exploring the deep meanings of such Chinese criticality, and they did not have the context to understand it. These illustrations of Chinese modes of critical thinking oppose to the studies which have concerned that students from China who cannot demonstrate their critical capabilities, arguing their best performance in their most familiar language were silenced orally and intellectually (Singh, 2011a, 2011b; Meng, 2012).

Yildiz (2012) argues that the ‘monolingual paradigm [obscures] the widespread nature of multilingualism’ (p. 2). The monolingual paradigm invites universities and multilingual students to imagine that English is the only language in which modern, innovative knowledge is produced, excluding many other languages. Contemporary language practices in Anglophone universities are a response to ‘an overriding monolingual framework’ rather than postmonolingual evidence of a ‘plurilingual’ ethos and practices (Honér, 2014, p. 352). Favouring a monolingual knowledge
framework continues to restrain Chinese international students’ cross-language capabilities for critical thinking. In fact the influence of Chinese knowledge on Western intellectual is now ‘rationally denied’ by the monolingual paradigm (Meng, 2012, p. 26). The problem of the monolingual paradigm will be further explained and elaborated on in the next chapter.

The strangler fig mode of critical thinking has its influence on these interviewees’ critical reflection. Despite its moral aspects, interview data indicate that the strangler fig metaphor offers means for ordinary critical actors to extend the freedom of speech under institutional censors, especially with the sarcastic 大天朝 (Dà tiān cháo ‘heavenly dynasty’) reference. The bottom-up critical strategy provides critical actors opportunities to redress injustice, even if they are still powerless against their opponents.

This study initially expected that strangler fig mode of critical thinking would have educational implications for postgraduate students from China. Although, as Table 5.2 shows, such a mental strategy was evidenced in their comments, participants’ perception of the obstructive influence of the strangler fig mode led to some unexpected findings.

5.8 Obstructive strangler fig mode of critical thinking

The strangler fig mode of critical thinking was generated through a popular cultural artifact, The Empresses of the Palace, and has been useful through analysis of the novel text. However, in contradiction to the anticipated benefit to postgraduate students’ education, interview evidence revealed a different perception.

Firstly, there participants questioned its educational use.

Zhen Huan’s critical thinking was too bureaucratic. I admit it may have uses in the political forum, and even in the everyday workplace. But it doesn’t have much use in the field of education. We don’t need to make the educational field more complicated than it has to be (Chi-Wu).
It is a strategy that can best presented by a story. Maybe it can be a literary way of structuring a story, but we cannot take it as an academic way of forming argument - it would be too subtle, even for Chinese readers, not to mention English readers... Isn’t this mode of critical thinking too fictional for research? How can you relate that to education? (Chi – Bai).

This could be a good critical strategy for secretaries to steal power from their boss and take over power... But I think it is too strategic and tricky to be used in learning. It is very complicated, and may not achieve its goal (Chi – Xia).

Central to these critiques of the educational use of stranger fig mode of critical thinking is concern over its complexity and subtlety. Even though some students acknowledged its value, its strategic or bureaucratic manner stops it making educational sense. Engaging a strangler fig mode may cause unnecessary ambiguity in academic learning and research. Additionally, as Xia mentions, such a practice cannot guarantee a desirable outcome. The costs of engaging this critical thinking strategy outweigh the benefits it may bring.

Secondly, although the study has shown how a strangler fig mode of critical thinking can give lower status critical actors the chances to tackle an institution, one student’s interview proposed a different understanding of this outcome.

I guess it has its own value. But I think if one person reaches the balance and takes over the power only through strangler fig mode of critical thinking, he would still have a dependent existence... He would always be a ‘fig’, but not an independent tree. So he cannot grow big enough - his future would be limited. (Aus-Tao)

This students’ critique on researcher’s critical thinking opened new perspectives. After acknowledging the value of the strangler fig mode, she limits its application. Tao thought through its potential and foresees its restraining influence on the critical actors’ future. Her s concern has hinted at directions for further investigation. Attention to Tao’s reasoning shows how this study examines claims reasonably while accepting that such claims are always open to critique.
This study has considered the strangler fig mode of critical thinking as a particular skill where critical actors suffer oppression from an institution. It may not be useful in every critical encounter, since different modes of critical approach need to be available to a critical actor. The aim is to minimise the constraints produced by each singular mode of critical thinking. This accords with the study’s appeal to multiple sources and modes of critical thinking, in English as well as in Chinese, to inform the learning and research of international students from China, postgraduate students in particular.

A third point: a definite wariness, a concern that a strangler fig of critical thinking might establish a negative image of students from China. The unethical and manipulative story of Zhen Huan has attracted criticism, and it is not surprising that interviewees are reluctant to make explicit of such a thinking skill.

In literature work such skill can be considered as an art. But if you promote it in a real life context... it is after all not an ethical way of thinking. Plus, the strangler fig mode of critical thinking - by its name it is sending an ungrateful, dangerous message (Chi - Xia).

You may need to put a lot of delimitation on this mode of critical thinking. Otherwise how would your readers see Chinese students? This could be a bad image of this cohort, for your own cohort... Even if you see it, you shouldn’t talk about it (Aus-e-Han)

These participants saw the strangler fig mode of critical thinking as bad publicity for students from China. Their concerns have induced caution in the research. This study does not promote a strangler fig mode of critical thinking; rather, it advocates its use as a theoretical lens to examine social and educational issues. Yet the study considers Han’s approach - ‘even if you see it, you shouldn’t talk about it’ - less appropriate. For Rancière (2009), critical emancipation aims for a ‘dual effect’: an awareness of the hidden reality and a feeling of guilt about the denied reality’ (p. 27). The strangler fig mode of critical thinking can work as an analytical tool; there is no intention of discrediting Chinese or non-Chinese critical actors who may operate according to it. By comparison, the term Machiavellianism has attracted criticism through its implied deceitful expediency, yet it can still be regarded as a useful theoretical aid for significant academic analysis in organisation research (Singhapakdi, 1993), childhood psychology (Repacholi, Slaughter, Pritchard &
Gibbs, 2003; Barlow, Qualter & Stylianou, 2010) and adult psychology (Paal & Bereczkei, 2007). Here this discussion encounters a dilemma, expressed by Chen in terms of ‘a Chinese way of crossing the road:’ to find a way of using Chinese modes of critical thinking without implying negative stereotypes of Chinese critical actors. This will require careful and thorough research.

A fourth issue: students indicated that colloquial language explanations of the strangler fig mode have created confusion in conversations with Anglophone supervisors. Specifically, the use of ‘I’, ‘you’ and ‘we’ as subject caused a gap in communication between the Chinese presenters and the Anglophone audiences.

Has it been pointed out to you that you were using ‘you’ and ‘I’ as subject wrongly? …My supervisor corrected me a couple of times, when in talking about my own experience I used the subject ‘you.’ It is probably a strangler fig method because I tried to include my audience, through the language I used, so as to extend the generalisability of my experiences… through evoking ‘resonance’… to make him feel he has experienced the same thing. But it doesn’t work for my supervisor. He thought that I made grammatical mistakes (Aus-Chen).

According to Chen, the seemingly problematic use of ‘you’ instead of ‘I’ was a purposeful strategy to evoke ‘resonance’ among her audience, in this case, her supervisor. Likewise, according to the evidence listed in table 5.2, interviewees had avoided a mass use of ‘I’. Nan used ‘you’ instead of ‘I’ when he talked about 枪打 出头鸟 qiāng dǎ chū tóu niǎo, ‘the bird that sticks its neck out gets shot’; and ‘we’ instead of ‘I’ when he actually meant himself. So did Bao. These students used ‘we’ as a way of referring to themselves as well as their audiences, subtly elevating their experiences to a larger scale, as if these were common understanding. This language play intentionally removed the ‘I’ from the conversation, and borrowed power from

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1 After all, why cause problems you might not be able to deal with? You can still think about it, but you have to carefully choose the time and the ways to make it visible… You need time to consider what serves your purpose best while protecting yourself. As we say: 枪打 出头鸟.

2 I wonder if we translate 大天朝 to Australian fellow students, whether they would think we are arrogant and ignorant people. We will not use this word when talking to them, because they do not have the context (to understand it) – and they are not interested in it anyway.

3 Sometimes we will not present at the beginning what we most want to present. Sometimes we agree with the opponent, exploit their argument so they start to make mistakes.
the audience, by including them. The goal of this language play was to attach to the audiences (the host) and use their empathy as power to persuade them. Chen’s idea was to use subtle, complicated language play as an expression of a strangler fig mode of critical thinking. However, the critical tactic was not only not successful, but the approach was seen in terms of ‘grammatical mistakes’, and the approach was counter-productive. Although the study doubts that there is a problem *per se* in using you, I and we in a kind of mixture—in the mouth of a good speaker of English. For example, one can say ‘we see that we have no alternative. You regret it but you still do it. I know I do’ when s/he is only talking his/her own experiences. However, in interviewees’ cases, the strangler fig mode of critical thinking can be considered as an obstruction to practice, primarily because a comprehensible cross-cultural explanation of this subtle and complex phenomenon would require a high level of competence in English.

Problems and concerns with the strangler fig mode are set out above. The unexpected findings may break new ground for deeper nuanced understanding as well as indicating the need for future research (Yin, 2014; Denzin 2010). In the meantime, the next section discusses educational implications of the findings set out in this chapter.

### 5.9 Using Chinese modes of critical thinking

This chapter provides snapshots of ‘Chinese modes of critical thinking’: on one hand, strategic strangler fig ways of criticality presented in Chinese popular culture; and on the other hand the concepts of resourceful criticism of a dominant institution in Chinese language. Moreover, both strangler fig mode and the Chinese critical concepts attract Chinese postgraduate students’ continuing reflection. The evidence has shown that these modes of Chinese critical thinking are already available for international students from China to use.
By using the term ‘Chinese modes of critical thinking,’ this study is not making a claim that they contain particular Chinese essences not possessed by Anglophone critical actors; some such modes may in fact overlap with Western Anglophone modes of thinking. This study does not deny that there definitely are areas of Chinese thinking virtually unknown to Westerners. Yet in a globalised age where information is regularly imported and exported, it may not be valid to call any kind of critical idea generically Chinese. Machiavelli did not invent Machiavellianism - he just made certain political perspectives explicit.

Similarly, Zhen Huan did not invent the strangler fig mode of critical thinking. In this study, making sense of the term ‘Chinese modes of critical thinking’ is not significant because of its origin or its status as intellectual property. Rather it is because it can be verified and because it is a fitting subject for comment by research students and educators. To those who might seek to dismiss this study’s use of Chinese modes of critical thinking by questioning particular characteristics of the phenomenon, the following statement may be of value:

Between cultures peace does not arrive by dulling their edges, by reducing their range in other words, by each of them falling back to their own side; the solution, in other words, lies...in comprehension (Jullien, 2014, p.140).

It is important that this research uses the term ‘Chinese modes of critical thinking’ in order to contest a deficit view of Chinese students, where one argument is that critical thinking is a foreign idea to these students, so that they lack the capacity for it (Egege & Kutieleh, 2004; Ochoa, 2013; Clark & Gieve, 2006). On the basis of Ranciere’s (1991) postulate of intellectual equality, this study has explained and illustrated Chinese modes of critical thinking in order to justify the intellectual capabilities of ordinary Chinese critical actors and also specifically Chinese postgraduate students. These students are:

always active, not passive. They were frankly critical, even critical in the manner of critical sociologists, forever unmasking the hidden intentions and biases of their opponents... [to them] the social world does not appear to be a site of domination endured passively and unconsciously, but instead a space shot through by a multiplicity of disputes, critiques, disagreements and attempts to re-establish locally agreements that are always fragile (Boltanski, 2011, p.27).
Strangler fig mode of critical thinking generates new understandings of criticality and critical thinking, as well as aesthetics and communication. It functions as an effective precursor to the semi-structured questions and analysis of the interview with interviews with the participants in this research, which yielded often heartfelt information about the stresses and strains experienced by many Chinese international postgraduate students and also their determined strategies for surviving and indeed thriving in sometimes alien learning and living environments, often monolingual.

The demonstration Chinese modes of critical thinking is expected to help open paths for Anglophone educators and universities to take in appropriate sources from a culturally different linguistic and theoretical knowledge framework. To this end, this research aims to contributing to intercultural divergence (Jullien, 2014) in a desirable multilingual and intercultural educational environment. At the same time, however, it is worth rehighlighting, this study has no intention of attempting to prove that all Chinese students can think critically and do think critically, nor does it know of a way to do so. The focus of the study, on the contrary, is to explore how modes of Chinese critical thinking can be entered on Anglophone Wester-centric linguistic and theoretical agendas, and provide insights to contest the monolingual paradigm and interrupt the progress of uniformization.

To unveil the Chinese modes of critical thinking, this chapter has mapped the techniques used to struggle against a dominant institution (Boltanski, 2011). A defining concept of the ‘strangler fig mode of critical thinking’ has been used as an analytical tool to interpret Chinese students’ critical capacity and practical critical performance. Although it has informed their critical perspectives, it has also been found to obstruct their educational studies. Thus the educational merits of the strangler fig concept of critical thinking need to remain an open question for the time being at least.

Yet new angles to examine strangler fig mode of critical thinking may warrant further research. It can be approached through a feminist perspective, as it is expressed and interpreted through a woman’s experience in fighting to survive in an extremely patriarchal setting. It can also be considered in relation to bureaucratic issues, since it represents tricky, unethical avenues of power struggle. But of prime
concern for this study is the use of the strangler fig metaphor as a theoretical tool to interpret patterns, tendencies and potential in specific educational matters.

Emerging from this chapter is a concern to address the neglect of students’ skills and knowledge, specifically relating to the access their language provides to various modes of critical thinking. The richness of Chinese modes of critical thinking is deeply rooted in the fruitfulness and productivity of Chinese language. The examples illustrated in Table 5.2 hint at the intellectual heritage of the Chinese peoples as a ‘community of arguers, enquirers and critics’ (Bridges, cited in Singh, 2009, p. 193). Integral to a necessary presumption of intellectually equal students from China with critical capacity is a recognition of Chinese ‘intellectual and creative behaviour’ (p. 193). However, the English monolingual paradigm, and English-only theory and pedagogies have created tensions in Anglophone education. In overlooking Chinese students’ critical capabilities in their native tongue, the monolingual paradigm has obscured prospects for advancement in intercultural divergences through education. This is for Chinese international students, and especially postgraduate students, to contest.

Chinese multilingual students’ thinking may not need to be confined to university curricula. Chinese critical resources produced by students from China can ‘exceed their literal meaning’ and be introduced into ‘theoretical conversational between the East and West so as to democratise Australian education’ (Meng, 2012, p. 249). Chinese modes of critical thinking can be used to supplement theory in monolingual universities to produce new theoretical effects (Yildiz, 2012). The educational advantages of different critical perspectives need to be applied in relation to contextual challenges. As a way of verifying intellectual equality, a different pedagogical approach is called for demystify Chinese modes of critical thinking in Anglophone universities.
5.10 Conclusion to Chapter Five

Disclaiming a ‘deficit view’ that Chinese students lack a capacity for critical thinking, this chapter has introduced a ‘strangler fig mode’ as a conceptual embodiment of Chinese criticality, and has demonstrated students’ critical practice using their mother tongue. Inspired by Boltanki’s (2011) defence of a capacity by ordinary people to produce critique and Rancière’s (1991) presupposition of intellectual equality, the chapter identifies examples of Chinese modes of critical thinking produced by ordinary Chinese critical actors. In a small selection of examples, some students tried unsuccessfully to engage Chinese modes of critical thinking in theoretical conversation with Australian fellow students; some were reluctant to employ these modes for other reasons. The English monolingual paradigm (Yildiz, 2012) tends to act as a restraint on Chinese modes of critical thinking. A Western-defined view of Chinese international students’ critical thinking that does not consider the theoretical assets provided by these students’ heritage language and existing knowledge can ‘over-simplify and distort’ the mechanisms underlying a stereotyped expression of them (Meng, 2012, p.15). Alternative pedagogies are needed to rectify this situation and encourage these students to take the opportunity to draw on their existing Chinese modes of critical thinking.
A RADICAL PURSUIT: CRITICAL THINKING OF STUDENTS FROM CHINA IN THE ANGLOPHONE UNIVERSITIES

6.0 Introduction

The research question frames this chapter is: what reasons may underpin the construction of Chinese students as uncritical and disengaged learners?

Chapter Two has reviewed an abundant literature discussing the capacity of Chinese international students for critical thinking. Some claim that these students differ from their monolingual English-speaking peers through deficiency in their capabilities for critical thinking (Cadman & Song, 2012; Liu & Hu, 2005; Durkin, 2008; Turner, 2006). Others present counter-arguments through demonstrating the possibilities of Chinese modes of critical thinking in Australian universities (Singh, 2009; Qi, 2015; Meng, 2012).

The present chapter begins by analysing institutional effects on critical thinking of students from China. It then concentrates on the choices students from China make in their learning and research, between English language and critical knowledge on the one hand and Chinese language and modes of critical thinking on the other. Following this the chapter discusses student critical recognition of the commodification of Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking communicated through English. It then uses the concept of a radical pursuit of Western critical thinking framework in Chinese international students’ critical mind. This is juxtaposed with the concept of 顶天立地 (dǐng tiān lì dì, ‘a firmly based spirit of adventure’). This chapter employs the following theoretical concepts to analyse evidence, namely: institution (Boltanski, 2011), cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984), intellectual inequality (Rancière, 1991), uniformization (Jullien, 2014), and postmonolingual condition (Yildiz 2012).
6.1 Institutional pressure on Chinese modes of critical thinking

This thesis argues that Chinese modes of critical thinking experienced by students from China are restricted by institutional pressure. The institutional pressure analysed in this chapter relates to literary work and social practices, and to the field of education. Through a defining what is ‘appropriate,’ institutions discipline critical actors to operate within a determined remit, that is to say scope or sphere of action (Boltanski & Thevenot, 2009). This implies that for students who use critical thinking they have to operate under the pressure of institution-determined rules and principles. The pressure for critical thinking is buttressed by a hierarchical power relation:

Chinese critical thinking is strongly influenced by the status of the person or persons to whom a critical idea is addressed. If one is proposing one’s critical ideas to a superior, the mode of proposing will be indirect and strategic, in what we normally consider as the mild, strategic Chinese way… If it is to someone of lower status, the criticism could be quite clear and sometimes direct (Chi-Huang).

Sometimes I feel when Westerners make critical comment they are also very polite and they are considerate about someone else’s ‘face.’ So from this point of view we [Chinese] are not so different from them. The difference is that Western social environments prize critical thinking, and people will just consider matters of politeness before they propose critical comments, and that might be all. But the environment in China is different, and people are likely to consider consequences before they make a criticism, and politeness afterwards (Aus-Nan).

Empirical wisdom in [Chinese] society tells us that when people are in a position of authority, the critical comments they make will be different from those made by people who are not in a position like that, and their comments will be a little more aggressive than theirs. This is natural. You speak the way people in your position speak and you try to make the people above you like what you are saying. When you put critical comments to your superiors, you make sure that what you say is worth saying and that your superior can make use of your comments (Chi-Wu).

These interview excerpts indicate that ‘status’, ‘power’ and ‘position’ seem to alter people’s practice of critical thinking. An institutionally defined hierarchy embodies symbolic threat to critical thinkers through hinting at its potential power inequalities.
without making this verbally explicit. Nan referred to such potential power as ‘consequences.’ Her comment does not include descriptions of what these ‘consequences’ could be, and how the ‘consequences’ would affect critical thinking actors. This type of symbolic institutional threat, or *institutional pressure*, carries more disciplinary power than explicit pressures: for actors who have sufficient knowledge of the situation, its implicit nature can create a moment of uncertainty. In Boltanski’s (2011) words, ‘uncertainty threatens social arrangements and hence the fragility of reality’ (p. 54) — uncertainty disturbs regular social life for a critical actor and should be shunned. Institutional guidelines direct critical actors to avoid ‘consequences.’ It follows that such fixed principles are accepted by critical actors without being questioned or challenged. Interviewees stated that this hierarchical principle is understood as ‘empirical social wisdom’ (Chi-Wu). Ways of putting forward critical comment, and ways of engaging with anything critical, are subject to the audience in question. In the cases mentioned by interviewees, critical comments have been made to correspond with hierarchical imprimatur in order to avoid *institutional pressure*. By identifying hierarchical power relations, critical actors are able to be sensitive as to how far their critical comment can go.

Scholars Berry (2011) and Davies (2007) have reported that Chinese intellectuals are cautious with their written critical comment. Ordinary individuals typically also find that they need to be cautious in expressing critical views. To refer to the view that Chinese students lack critical thinking ability, and the common observation that they are quiet in class and appear passive (Tran, 2013; Deng & Pei, 2009), the above evidence relating to pressures on them tends to show that they may not necessarily be characterised as uncritical or only mildly critical. Nan believed that politeness is one quality characterising a Western critical approach as well as a Chinese one. Research has in fact noted that politeness is a main reason for students from China quietness in class and delay in critical discussion (Tran, 2013). Nan pointed *institutional pressure* as a possible cause of delay in Chinese modes of critical thinking: when making a critical comment, Chinese critical actors seem to assess whether they are within a safe semantic range to ensure that their critical thinking is within institutional boundaries. Wu argued that a critical actor is expected to stick strictly to his or her position while evaluating the influence a critique could exert on that position.
In constructing a cautious stance towards *institution pressure*, critical actors check their critical thinking themselves before the institution does. In Nan’s words, this tendency is recognisably a form of self-censorship.

In the academic articles published in journals you will find more critical thinking on Western theories and past theories than on theories of contemporary Chinese academics. It is understandable that academics will engage in such *self-censorship* because they need to be sure not to offend the authorities in this field and so influence their own future. If critical thinking is needed, they will do this in a rather mild way, mixing compliments and agreement with a little criticism. I believe this is not being uncritical; on the contrary, it is more critical, because before engaging with their own critical thinking, they have to consider the power situation, the possible consequences and so on. Then if the choice is made that they can and should make the critical comments, they will have to think carefully about how to make the comments more acceptable. In making such comments the thinking process is rather complicated (Aus-Nan).

In this evidentiary excerpt, Nan is pointing out one of the ‘consequences’ that critical actors, specifically research students, want to avoid. *Institutional pressure* is embedded in critical practices and so critical actors’ critical practices are monitored by themselves. Academics choose to criticise arguments with less risk, to fulfil a requirement to be critical, but they do this within a safe space. In what Nan sees as a carefully thought out choice, critical actors move from sharp, incisive criticism to low risk criticism. And yet it is possible to take another view, of self-censorship as a compromise between the desire for expression and institutional pressure. Boltanski (2011) argues that critical thinking is capable of transforming an institution, but he sees critical thinking on a self-censorship model, which is determined by the structure of the institution’s principles, inevitably falling under the institution’s hierarchy, so with little power to change the institution on which it relies.
6.2. 得到了天空，失去了大地 Dédào le tiānkōng, shīqù le dàdì

‘Gain the sky but lose the earth’

A saying that has circulated throughout the community of international students from China provides insight into the disposition, skills and habits of mind that constitute critical thinking:

得到了天空，失去了大地 Dédào le tiānkōng, shīqù le dàdì ‘Gain the sky but lose the earth.’¹

The implication is that if one embraces the West, one will gradually lose the elements that make one Chinese. In a situation where these international students from China have a cross-language capacity between Chinese and English and are gaining intercultural education in Australian universities, some perceive a need to act in a ‘Western’ fashion and suppress elements making up their identity as Chinese.

6.2.1 Coming to terms with Western critical thinking

Bourdieu’s (1977, 1984) concept of cultural capital has been defined as ‘proficiency in and familiarity with dominant cultural codes and practices’ (Aschaffenburg & Mass, 1997, p.573). This cultural capital can be identified as an initial obstacle for students from China to demonstrate their capacity for critical thinking. When they first come to the Australian educational environment, they face challenges in processing English language Western-centric cultural capital as embodied in values and uses of critical thinking. Interviews show that students from China see critical thinking as a new skill and habit of mind to be learned, adopted and practised at the first stage of study in an Australian university.

After all, our whimsical language play cannot be translated into English… We are so used to speaking in a Chinese strategic way to protect ourselves… But this seems not to work here (Aus-Qiu).

¹ Retrieved from http://www.zhihu.com 15 Nov 2013. Zhihu 知乎 is a Chinese question-and-answer website where questions are created, answered and edited by the user community. It is highly interactive, with best responses voted upwards. Zhihu users include high-profile Chinese entrepreneurs and intellectuals.
To be frank, I did not have a comprehensive picture of critical thinking when I was studying in China. I am not saying that we do not have this type of education; it is just perhaps not emphasised enough? I mean, we are encouraged by our teachers to present our own ideas and thinking, but we didn’t regard this as an everyday practice as they do here (Aus-Tao).

In argumentative writing, we are used to placing our argument at the end, where our argument has been gradually built up by all the analysis… The last part is the ‘eye’ of the whole paper… and we draw the ‘eye’ last, in case anything new has emerged from the analysis process (Chi-Bao).

When I started studying as an undergraduate here, I always had teacher comment that my essay ‘doesn’t make sense.’ I was going to make sense, but they had to read to the end, and think back. This is rhetorical, we do it to make our paper look more sophisticated, achieve an effect … I gradually realised this is just not the way to do it (Aus-Chen).

In their responses, the interviewees clearly distinguished ‘Western’ critical thinking. They repeatedly referred to ‘their way’ as a different practice they needed to adapt to yet they felt uncomfortable with. These students were conscious of their individual ideas, their logic and the structure of their writing. But these capacities for critical thinking were called into question by unfamiliar requirements and assessment criteria in a new educational environment—judgements made by the dominant Western culture that pose a symbolic power in the mind of the students (Bourdieu, 1984).

In a multilingual, intercultural classroom, teachers and local students who are privileged with English language assets and skilled modes of critical thinking arguably represent a dominant class with access to cultural capital. English and its associated modes of critical thinking can be regarded as a culture-specific demand placed on all students, and may present particular difficulties for international students from non-Western educational backgrounds. Marginalised and not possessing this cultural capital, they may be unable to rely on their existing knowledge and skills to respond to the implicit, culturally defined expectations on them (Lawrence, 2005).

Evidence collected from students indicates agreement that there are relatively clear distinctions on the definition, evaluation and assessment of critical thinking capabilities. Bourdieu (1984) distinguishes cultural capital as a ‘valid empirical
verification to draw out the immanent structures...within the unities that can be constructed on the basis of the principles of division which objectively define the major classes’ (cited in Bennett, 2011, p.537). In a multilingual and intercultural environment where Western Anglophone teachers and students have already been defined as a dominant class, cultural capital marks the division between them and their non-Western peers. International students from China indicated that critical thinking in a Western educational setting was different from that in China.

I had this idea before I came, Western schools are different, they greatly value critical thinking, even though I was not clear what was meant by critical thinking… It was just a fancy, sophisticated Western word (Aus-Jin).

On arrival overseas, Jin had already perceived that critical thinking skills valued in the Chinese educational system and the skills in a Western educational system were ‘different’. Acquiring the cultural capital of the new environment was is a vehicle to convey them into the dominant culture and achieve academic success. It was not surprising if students from China might think they have to learn and value a ‘sophisticated’ Western mode of critical thinking over their existing Chinese mode - the cultural heritage mode which according to Qiu seemed not to work in Australia. The dilemma embodied in such a choice is well captured by the phrase 得到了天空，失去了大地 (dédào le tiānkōng, shīqù le dàdì, ‘Gain the sky but lose the earth’).

Cultural capital acts as a social relation within universities that uses the accumulated knowledge of deductive modes of critical thinking to confer power and status through institutional recognition (Bourdieu, cited in Bennett, 2011). The institutional hierarchy tied to cultural capital is also evident in one student’s review of Chinese education of critical thinking skill:

Actually, the Chinese educational system is also Westernised. When I was doing my undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, our teachers also encouraged us to put forward our own opinions, perspectives and point of view—to think critically, as valued by Western culture—rather than simply following the instructions in the textbook, or the teachers’ instructions. Our cultures are not so different now (Aus-Tao).
Tao’s comment on critical thinking in a ‘Westernised’ Chinese educational system however implies a proposition that ‘thinking critically’ is essentially something that is valued by the West, the allophone education, and that the capacity for critical thinking is a Western intellectual and cultural product, despite that this capability is also historically greatly valued in Chinese education. Tao refers to this as a ‘cultural difference,’ implying an unequal judgement in evaluating this intellectual product. As Hoskins and Sallah (2011) argue, ‘simplistic focus on culture hides unequal power relations’ (p.114). Tao considers that because Chinese education is ‘Westernised,’ it is ‘not so different’ from Western education now. Underlying Tao’s response is a view that the Chinese educational system needs to mobilise the capacity for a critical thinking that is defined by Western educational systems. Thus although Tao is putting forward a defence for Chinese international students, in that they possess the capability for critical thinking, the argument that she has presented actually implies an unconscious acceptance of Western cultural dominance.

6.2.2 Performing critically in the West

An assumption of intellectual inequality (Rancière, 1991) is a major hindrance to the critical performance of students from China in cross-language and intercultural learning and research. Rancière’s (1991) critique of pedagogies of explanation ‘centres on those pedagogies’ presupposition and verification of the principle and logic of inequality’ (Chambers, 2013, p. 644). He suggests that ‘explanation, or the ordinary routine of pedagogic practice, is above all a display of inequality’ (Rancière, 2011, p.40). Asked about monolingual English-speaking educators’ encouragement for critical engagement, one student described a predisposing concept of intellectual inequality some teachers’ pedagogy.

All the teachers would try to help me to ‘adapt.’ I was told by one of my lecturers, and one of the academic advisers, We are not testing for what you already know, we are testing you for what you learnt in this class. My lecturer was trying to reassure me not to worry about my English and lack of background knowledge, but I really did not feel happy when she said that to me then (Aus-Chen).
This evidentiary excerpt indicates Chen’s prior knowledge (what you already know) is passed over, enabling lecturers’ explanations (what you learnt in this class) to be the sole focus for assessing student learning. In this way explanatory pedagogies initially set barriers through establishing an intellectual space of inequality, and then extend that inequality as they assess student acquisition of the explanations provided in class.

This interview excerpt indicates that little attention is given to Chen’s prior knowledge or knowledge of critical thinking she might access in Chinese. Instead, she was expected to ‘adapt’ by ‘learning new things.’ Effectively deprived of her prior knowledge or not taking the initiative to use it, the student was seemingly placed in an unequal intellectual position with her Australian peers through the effect of the English-only monolingual paradigm. The content taught in class privileges Australian students’ prior monolingual knowledge, so that the foreign students have to rely on an unequal foundation in responding to linguistically constrained educational expectations (Tian & Low, 2011). As De Vita points out, the ‘rhetoric of education internationalisation hides the fact that intercultural interaction, in and outside the classroom, is not happening naturally’ (cited in Spiro, 2014, p. 66).

This pedagogy of intellectual inequality sometimes does not manifest itself in a sharp and direct way. Rather it subtly yet effectively infiltrates students’ practices of critical thinking. One Interviewee demonstrated submission to the imposition of such inequality.

Writing an argumentative essay is rather different from the way we do it in China. But sometimes if you insist on using something Chinese-related it takes a long time and a lot of effort to make your point clear, given the language difference, not to mention the difficulties that we ESL students encounter... Sometimes after a lot of explanation, your audience loses interest and you feel awkward. Finally, your interest in using Chinese-related things gets less and less and you just want to find an English equivalent term or idea to make it easier for your audience and for yourself... Why use ten sentences to explain some Chinese concept when you can make your idea clear using one English sentence? (Aus-Cai).

Cai faced with a monolingual English-speaking audience which becomes impatient with her elaborate accounts. Moreover, she has difficulty in explaining a Chinese critical thinking in English. Cai waives use of her intellectual resources from Chinese
because she cannot find a way to make them interesting and accessible to her audience. The capabilities has to be developed is not to submit to solely Anglophone modes of critical thinking and not constrain her own critical thinking. Frustrating as this may be, she has accepted that her home grown system is not a meaningful option for her in the situation.

In such cases, pedagogy of intellectual inequality places these postgraduate students from China in a dilemma. They can adopt the newly explained-and-taught Western English taught modes of critical thinking. In doing so, they are assured of a pass result. Yet they do so at a shallow level. This hardly leads to an intellectual productive solution. To work with their alternative critical intellectual framework would require an exceptional ability to translate their thinking into good academic English as well as an immensely difficult shadow process of reasoning. Hence the metaphor, "Gain the sky but lose the earth" (Dédào le tiānkōng, shīqù le dàdì, ‘Gain the sky but lose the earth’). The pedagogy of intellectual inequality underestimates the power of these students’ native language and their existing critical capabilities. This pedagogy encourages students to reach for the Western ‘sky’ and discounts their Chinese fundamental ‘earth’ from which they are able to mine valuable resources.

Issa (2009) finds that this ‘unchanging teacher/students power relationship’ in universities generates or otherwise reinforces academics’ ‘low expectation towards the minority students’ (p.17). Spiro (2010) reports that multilingual international students unsurprisingly experience feelings of alienation at being ‘excluded from higher education settings that are culturally new to them’ (p.67). The consequence of such less trusting educational environment which less likely to value students’ existing critical thinking in other language and knowledge system, according to Canagarajah (2011), is that students to become more introverted and reluctant to engage in meaningful discussions.

By contrast, a pedagogy of intellectual equality (Rancière, 1991) begins by presupposing students can use their cross-language capabilities to expand their framing of critical thinking, giving their power to learn by finding chances to be mobilised (Citton, 2010). In a multilingual environment, students have the linguistic
and intellectual resources with which they may reveal their critical thinking using knowledge from divergent sources (Ranciere, 1991). Intellectual equality may be realised when a student uses ‘what you already know’ to learn something new. Pedagogies of intellectual equality mobilise multilingual students to explore the potential of their language(s) and knowledge. This may also encourage academics to remove the obstacles created by English monolingualism because this can impede them from achieving the academic success. As Deranty (2010) argues, ‘the same intelligence is at work in all the acts of the human spirit’, and this is not just as a claim about ‘capacities of individuals but also about the possibility of communication between human beings’ (p. 7). Singh (2010) challenges English monolingual literacy theory, by developing pedagogies of intellectual equality that promote academic achievement among multilingual research students through putting aside inequality and stimulating student use of their own languages with their embodied concepts in order to deepen and extend their learning.

6.2.3 Intellectual inequality and uniformization

Pedagogy may be analysed for evidence of its drive for uniformization (Jullien, 2014), such as English and its associated mode of critical thinking. Jullien (2014) contends that uniformization is ‘is only a sterile repetition of…the most favourable cases of a standardisation’ (2014, pp. 10, 11). Pedagogy of uniformity derived from a favouring modes of critical thinking and its associated monolingualism can hinder the critical exploration of culture and knowledge and reduces intellectual divergence. Such pedagogy found expression in 2015 when 40 percent of students, mostly Chinese international postgraduate students, failed in a course of ‘Critical Thinking in Business’ at the University of Sydney. The answers the Deputy Dean provided in regard to this incidence of failure can be read from the perspective of intellectual inequality and a promotion of the pedagogy of uniformization:

"We do have a large number of students coming to us from bachelor degrees undertaken elsewhere, including in mainland China, where the dominant mode of learning is what we would describe as passive learning rather than critical thinking and engaged learning...What we've been
seeking to do is transition students coming into our programs from that very different learning system or education values system to ... the critical thinking approach (Griffits, 2015).

This evidentiary newspaper excerpt shows the Deputy Dean identifying the education system in mainland China as ‘different’, where the difference is described in terms of ‘passive learning’. The University seeks to ‘transition’ these international students from Chinese modes of learning to ‘the critical thinking approach,’ with the implication that there is only one critical thinking approach and it is the Western approach adopted by the University of Sydney. There is an implication that such a ‘different’ education system here, including that in China as well as other nations, may be an inferior education system that produces passive learners and are unable to engage critical thinking - because these learners are required to be transitioned to their program through acquiring a critical thinking approach in order to achieve academic success.

The Deputy Dean gives little recognition to the existing knowledge of and capacity for critical thinking by students from China in general. The critical and engaged learning style of Australian universities is asserted as superior to the ‘passive’ learning style of the Chinese education system, which does not involve ‘critical thinking and engaged learning.’ The message is that these international students from China do not have a capability to be critically engaged in learning, and thus the University is responsible to assist them to learn a new, better way of studying. Citton (2010) sees in the display of intellectual inequality a moral that says, ‘accept to submit your (lower) intelligence to my (higher) understanding today, in order to be my equal tomorrow’ (p.32). Before these students even begin their university study, they have already been labelled with this educational stereotype and relegated to an unequal position with their Australian peers. The university program expects them to adapt in order to eventually achieve a critical thinking competence equal to that favoured in Australian education. It appears that the university is attempting to pursue equality by bringing weak students to a more equal level, and yet its approach is actually in conflict with its stated purpose through ‘relying on (and by perpetuating) the very inequality it pretends to abolish (Citton, 2010, p.32).
According to the media reports and literature reviewed in chapter one and two, and this piece of evidence; the ‘inferiority of their intelligence’ (Ranciere, 1991, p.39) in critical thinking skill is a prevailing assumption regarding international students from China (Matthews, 2016; Zhu, 2015; Ringmar, 2013; Ochoa, 2013; Asmar, 2005; Clark & Gieve, 2006; Goode, 2007). Universities are urged to deal with this ‘problem’ (Clark & Gieve, 2006; Goode, 2007; Business school Deputy Dean in Sydney university) in spite of the evidence adduced in this thesis that the ‘problem’ has been defined in terms of assumptions based on an unjustified perception that Chinese international students are of unequal critical thinking intelligence and capabilities.

The Deputy Dean’s comment appears to amount to a claim that there is a universal quality of 'critical thinking'. Testing this quality specifically against the education system in China through identifying its’ uncritical passiveness may be regarded as an affirmation of ownership of critical thinking: that critical thinking and engaged learning is an Australian or Western educational product which is not possessed by Chinese education. Cadman and Song (2012) see in international education a dynamic cultural exchange between settled, local communities on the one hand and diverse, multi-ethnic students on the other is majorly a unidirectional flow from the former to that later; and it can be viewed as a type of uniformization. This uniformizing trend as it dominates divergent minority groups tends towards the endorsement of a desired perspective. Where students from China are concerned, the unidirectional uniformizing flow not only ignores the possibility of a divergent Chinese education but even requires the Chinese side to make unilateral compromises. These compromises can be far reaching, as they not only relate to the acquisition of skills in critical thinking but—as this thesis demonstrates through a variety of examples—extend to aspects of the role of language in the learning process.

The Professor [Deputy Dean] … said the Business School expected its international students to achieve high scores in English language tests: ‘We need to do what we can to support students and there will be some students referred to extra support, and we are looking at making that support mandatory,’ he said (Smith, 2015).
Thus the suggested solution to an alleged problem that Chinese students lack critical thinking skills is to make English courses mandatory. In effect this is to say that promotion of critical thinking and a strong role for English are accepted as defining features of international education. Yet the existing critical thinking skills of students from China, demonstrated through a cross-language capacity based on knowledge of their heritage language and culture (Ranciere, 1991), are underestimated or dismissed. However as Jullien (2014) argues, uniformization arises ‘not from a necessity but from convenience’ (p. 11): it is less costly for universities to take the Anglophone model of critical thinking standards, that are already structured and ready to be used, than it is to create a flexible model which considers different participants’ interests and subsequently update model. Jullien (2014) also argues that communication between cultures ‘remains prejudiced by power relations and oblique strategies’ (p.160). In this case, international education may not be as open to divergence as claimed, since this would prevent it from being ‘operative of itself’ (p.160). Bianco (2015) claims that uniformization can be viewed as a reflection of privileged Western capitalistic values, so that Chinese international students’ language capacity and intercultural resources are suppressed in the interests of strengthening Western—specifically Anglophone—modes of thought and education. The construct of uniformization appears inertial and in Jullien’s (2014) view ‘sterile, incapable of being mobilised’ (p.163). It appears that in this situation educators have laid down Western standards of critical skills and language use while paying scant attention to students’ intercultural intellectual potential. Ironically, following the discussion in Section 2.1.1, the University of Sydney’s aim of uniform modes of critical thinking and language use amount to a process of standardisation—the very characteristic of Chinese education extensively criticised by Western scholars.

Of course, this study is aware of Sydney University’s rationale in the changes they made and would make. It is reported that the high rate of failure is a result of introducing a mandatory in-class final exam, which aims to avoid academic ghostwriting (Donohoe, 2015). Professor Shields admitted although there was no evidence to substantiate the claim, these was scandal of that 1000 students, many from the universities level, had used a third party company to write essay for them (Donohoe, 2015). In November 2014, a ghostwriting company owned by a Chinese woman Yingying Dou was uncovered, revealing students enlist a website called
Mymaster to write essays and assignments for them as well as sit online tests, paying up to $1000 for the service (McNeilage & Visentin, 2014). Scholarly research on ghostwriting argues that students need to behave ethically and exclude ghostwriters (Zheng & Cheng, 2015). Hu and Lei (2016) conduct a study with 142 Chinese university EFL teachers and 270 undergraduate students, reporting a clear disapproval of and harsh stance on recognized cases of plagiarism in English academic writing. Likewise, media posts report on and criticize the industry chain which was already established in the business of ghostwriting (Marie, 2014; Qiyi, 2016). Action is called for in this research and these reports. Mindful of this background, this study has no intention to criticise Sydney University’s change in policy and curriculums. Instead, it seeks to extend and deepen the understanding of such issue, by providing a different way of viewing the incident from my own point of view as a Chinese international postgraduate student point of view, having witnessed Chinese international postgraduate students’ capabilities for critical thinking through the present research.

The view of intellectual inequality and the pedagogy of uniformization reflected in the University of Sydney statement emphasise, rather than a divergence between cultural and linguistic critical intelligence, a difference that implies incompatibility and so tends to hinders the ‘equal opening up’ (Jullien, 2014, p.141) of intellectual resources. Sydney and other universities affirm the value of Western, particularly English, modes of critical thinking, and unveils a uniform Western 天空 (tiānkōng ‘sky’) to Chinese international PRC students. During this process, universities gives little credit to these students’ 大地 (dàdì ‘earth’ or ‘ground’), their educational and cultural background, the language they have inherited, and their capacity for critical thinking. In Qi (2015)’s view, this type of international education with its ‘obsession with Western knowledge’ not only stifles non-Western knowledge but the capacity of non-Western people to productively employ criticism for educational purposes’ (p. 6).
6.2.4 Learning the art of Western critical thinking

In the *monolingual paradigm*, ‘a language is a clearly demarcated entity that has a name, is countable, and is the property of the group that speaks it, while also revealing that group’s idiosyncrasies’ (Yildiz, 2012, p. 7). During interviews with the research participants about their capability for critical thinking, the following Chinese international students, presented observations and details of experiences that give expression to the *monolingual paradigm*.

I know this [critical thinking] is not so hard to learn, only hard to present, especially when I write an essay in a Western structure in English (Aus-Hai).

We cannot expect them to understand. We just came here. We *are studying in their country, in their culture, doing tests in English. We should adapt to them* (Aus-Qiu).

I think even if I *do not speak fluently* enough to present my idea, *I know my idea is OK*. My idea *fits what they require as critical thinking*. But I also know, *I have to present my idea in their way*. I cannot follow the flow of my mind but have to do this in a relatively backward manner (Aus-Jin).

It appears that promotion of Anglophone modes of critical thinking is taken for granted as characterising multilingual intercultural education. Some students from China choose to believe that the hierarchy presented by the English-only *monolingual paradigm* should be followed rather than challenged, with the understanding that monolingual Western universities ‘have the authority and the means to assess students and do so based on a set of assumptions, values and expectations that are not always made explicit’ (Devlin, 2013, p.950). Lawrence (2005) argues that domestic students who attend Anglophone higher education are expected to acquire a capacity in critical thinking and demonstrate appropriate modes to present them in their primary language. In English-only lecture halls, critical thinking makes monolingual demands on all students, thereby denying, for multilingual students, international and domestic alike, the possibility of using the best possible linguistic resources for accessing their best examples of critical thinking. These students are unable to draw upon their strongest linguistic and intellectual resources, forced into a monolingual mode and forced draw upon knowledge in a second language. Noting that power is central in defining ‘an
educational culture,’ Dervin (2014) argues that power ‘determines what takes place in intercultural encounters and what cultural aspects matter’ (p.193). However, frustrated they may be, some students are convinced that they are supposed to do it in ‘their [Western] way’: ‘I cannot follow my flow of mind’ (Jin).

Students from China, who have before them two great languages, let us say the English ‘sky’ and the Chinese ‘earth,’ have to choose the English monolingual stream, reinforcing the hierarchy of the English tradition and disengaging their Chinese language capabilities. The monolingual triumphs over the multilingual. Contemporary language practices in Western universities are a response to, and expression of, ‘an overriding monolingual framework’ rather than a postmonolingual mode with evidence of a ‘plurilingual’ ethos or multilingual practices (Honer, 2014., p. 352). While this study considers the alleged international education need to manifest and develop the divergence made possible by multilingual and intercultural critical thinking possibilities brought by students, such as Chinese, Afghan, Russian students, from other ethnic groups, through supporting diversity of language media in Australian media.

6.3 Marketing the Anglophone critical mode commodity

Following the Section 6.3.3 account of the promotion of a pedagogy of uniformization to transmit a critical approach to allegedly uncritical Chinese students, this section elaborates on the endorsement of such uniformization by students from China themselves. In Jullien’s (2014) view, uniformization ‘imposes its standards as the only landscape’ (p.13). Our analysis of the pedagogy of uniformization questions the value of the dominant English monolingual approach and its associated modes of critical thinking; our analysis considers that uniformization deceives students from China and inundates them with a ‘flood of commodities’ (Rancière, 2009, p. 45), that is simulacra related to the prestige of knowing English.
In interviews, some students from China indicated a stance that implied acceptance of *uniformization* and their submission to the governance of English and its associated modes of critical thinking.

If you can use some original English concepts and theories in your work, it will look more sophisticated (高大上, *gāodàshàng* ‘high, big and lofty.’) And people will be convinced more easily, even if you just state the concept without elaborating on it. Because you used English theories…people will think you know more (Chi-Wu).

If you go abroad, you are expected to bring back Western modes of thinking, Western resources…this is your *competitive advantage* (Chi-Huang).

These two students showed appreciation for the uniform standard imposed by English and by Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking. According to them, English and Western thinking processes will be regarded as ‘sophisticated’ and a ‘competitive advantage’ when they carry out their critical thinking in China. Wu noted that employing English concepts and theories, even without collectively analysing them, would attract credit for critical work. These students’ responses made the point that English and associated Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking brought benefits for them. These standardised modes of language and critical thinking had material value for students who engaged with them, and given the apparently profitable outcomes of such uniform standards, such students indicated that they did aspire to a uniform of English with its associated modes of critical thinking.

The material value of English and critical thinking is evident in another student’s interview transcript:

> It is clear that this country is not necessarily so absolutely impressive in the international university recruitment market. But it is an English-speaking country featuring the Western mode of critical thinking … These factors make a *best-selling product* (Aus-Nan).

This identification of English and the Western mode of critical thinking as a ‘product’ marketed to students from China highlights the commodification of English and its associated critical thinking in the international marketing of Anglophone education. The Literature Review has already demonstrated the globalised marketing of
exported, uniformized educational goods by the English-speaking developed countries of the West to non-English-speaking developing countries in the East (Vongalis-Macrow, 2014; Tilak, 2008; Yan & Berliner, 2011a). Through *uniformization*, the dominance of English and associated critical thinking modes have been re-affirmed in the field of international education.

This *uniformization* has also shaped students’ mind of what to be achieved in study.

We go abroad to learn English and the Western way of thinking, as well as their ways of study and academic work. People will think that going abroad is a kind of ‘gold-plating.’ If we come back with poor English, people will criticise us for wasting money, or say that we have gone overseas because we couldn’t make anything of ourselves in China. Students who go abroad, here I mean the kind of students who go to study, will see practising English as their first and most significant task (Chi-Huang).

Huang’s comment points to the difference between studying English for its value in communication and academic research on the one hand and, on the other, studying English to try to be part of a Western cultural scene and also gain social approval in China. It is undeniable that good English and good insight into Western critical thinking will be an asset to Chinese people and to China. But Huang also states that English became the only criteria to access students’ learning in Western countries. Referring to Wu, the action of using English and its associated theories *per se* is an accreditation for academic superiority, while the intellectual work of making sense of them appears to be less important. These preferences for English, according to Pan (2015), is not surprising considering China has seen English as a global language. Students who have superior English proficiency would be regarded as having ‘major advantages’ in studying in China as well as in international education (p. 43).

Comments like ‘You speak English like an English/American person,’ ‘I thought English was your native language’ are most desired by ESL learners… Educators tend to take the capability for ‘communicating with Euro-American English speaking people’ and ‘thinking critically like Euro-American people’ as criteria to test Chinese students’ intercultural capabilities. We consider this view of learning to be like that of a child who has not developed an independent personality but tries to imagine being a grown-up by mimicking someone else (Gao, 2014, p.33).
It appears that students approach the uniformized standard privileged in international, intercultural education with the attitude that an education based on this standard is likely to be of practical benefit for them.

Here it is important to state the difference about the difference between learning to use English effectively, which is a matter of national Chinese Government policy and a valued aim in the Chinese academic world (Pan, 2015); and the illusion of English at the level of a native speaker. The recognition of English to be a product, a commodifi
ty which can bring credit recorded above through Chinese postgraduate students’ interview raises concern. Pan (2015) argues there is an English mania sweeping through Chinese schools at all different level of education, even kindergartens. However, the fever of learning English is mainly concerned with the profit it can bring.

You are kept away (from everything such as education and career development) if you are not efficient in English. (Pan, 2015, p. 3).

Rather than a tool to facilitate meaningful and critical thinking, English in China creates an illusion in which students must acquire a good level of it as foundation of any further inquiries in academia, as well as career development. However, in this research case, English, as well as Chinese, needs to be considered as an instrument to develop students’ capabilities for thinking in culturally divergent perspectives. Students need to think more critically about the role of English in their study.

The alarming issue unmasked here is the silent de facto enactment of a settled, sterile linguistic-theoretical framework and critical thinking mode through uniformization (Jullien, 2014). The present chapter has no intention, and no means, to determine whether Chinese or English has a more ‘advanced’ mode of critical thinking. However, as critical thinking has become part of an Anglophone ‘package’, knowingly or unknowingly, students from China approach this uniform English critical mode as an advanced and competitive commodity. This creates space for assumption of intellectual inequality and implantation of pedagogy of uniformization, in turn suppressing the chance for divergence to flourish through engaging different language and critical knowledge. Accordingly, this study anticipates a vicious circle:
the more profit this uniform English critical mode brings, the more students choose to accept it, and the more the process of uniformization is reinforced and acquires credit.

6.4 The radical pursuit of the Anglophone critical mode

Up to this point this chapter has analysed ways in which the combined issues of institutional pressure, cultural capital and monolingual paradigm bear strongly on Chinese international students’ capacity for critical thinking. In doing so, the chapter has shown how the pedagogies of intellectual inequality and uniformization have influenced these students’ recognition of their critical thinking capability and their home heritage critical resources. Interview data collected for this research have illustrated some students’ radical pursuit of English and its associated mode of critical thinking and theoretical framework. In this sense, they have chosen to得到了天空，失去了大地(Dèdào le tiānkōng, shīqù le dàdì ‘gain the sky but lose the earth’). In order to reach for the ‘fancy, advanced’ (Aus-Jin) ‘competitive’ (Chi-Huang) and ‘best-selling’ (Aus-Nan) Western ‘sky,’ these students choose to ‘learn’ (Aus-Hai) and ‘adapt to’ (Aus-Chen) its standard language and critical resources. The interview transcripts displayed in this chapter show little acknowledgement of or attention to Chinese students ‘earth’—their existing Chinese language basis and associated theoretical framework.

The students in clearly aspiring to an English critical mode have made a choice involving subordination to the monolingual paradigm and uniformization. Despite knowing that they have potential critical capacity in the Chinese modes of critical thinking that they possess, they decline to elaborate these intellectual values with their English Anglophone peers. They simply employ English together with Western critical modes. The choice evident in the above analysis may be termed a radical pursuit in their critical thinking. This radical pursuit is an outcome of the interaction between students from China and their Anglophone educators. It is an indication of
how the linguistic-theoretical framework desired by these students has been transformed into a replica of their educators (see figure 6.1).

Before

Interaction

A- PRC students’ desirable linguistic-theoretical framework

Western English speaking educator-desired linguistic-theoretical framework

After

Figure 6.1: Radical pursuit in critical interaction

This critical choice by students from China, this radical pursuit, can be regarded as misguided. Fay (1987) argues that a process of genuine ‘critical emancipation’ implies that critical actors will themselves initiate change ‘to free themselves from their dissatisfactions;’ and also that it implies plans ‘indicating how this change is to take place’ (p. 39). Students from China engaging with this type of critical thinking
will show their willingness to change, their recognition of change and their strategy for change. However, this thesis argues that the radical pursuit of the Western mode of critical thinking in Anglophone linguistic-theoretical framework has in fact diverted them from a genuine critical emancipation. Facing the *uniformization* and *monolingual paradigm* of the Anglophone critical mode criticised by Singh and Lu (in press), and Cadman and Song (2012), these students’ radical pursuit of the Western critical ‘sky’ effectively endorses this unidirectional flow and further distances them from an equal conversation with their English-speaking educators and the Western, specifically Anglophone, theoretical framework.

The uniformity of the English *monolingual paradigm* with its associated critical thinking modes and theoretical knowledge has created an image with the potential for profitable use with Chinese international students. Rancière (2009) alleges an *illusion of image* that ‘seduces’ the multitude with ‘false promises’ (p. 46). The students have been persuaded by official endorsement of the uniform Anglophone critical mode, and they have assumed that their radical pursuit accords with their own interests. Yet they are pursuing a simulacrum: this is a course of subordination to pedagogy of *intellectual inequality* and *uniformization* that put them at an intellectually disadvantaged position where they are subjected to Anglophone assessment criteria in order to induce them to pay for this English critical commodity.

The Anglophone system of knowledge continually impels a process of *uniformization* through explaining Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking and theories in English to students from China. These students—as they accept the explanation and merely act on the content extracted from it—become exemplars of intellectually inadequate critical thinking and thus reinforcing elements in the *uniformization* process. Instead of combating the fixed Anglophone knowledge framework and working on reshaping it, these students are in effect helping to entrench that structure and so raise the bar for future students from China. Rather than contribute to overcoming the challenges of the *monolingual paradigm* and *uniformization*, they become part of the challenge. Rancière (2009) argues that although such students hope to exercise their individual and collective right to choose, in reality they are increasingly subject to institutional power (p. 44). Although learning English with its associated critical thinking skills is important for
Chinese international students to achieve academic success, their goal of learning should not be driven solely by the economic benefits they seek to obtain from education, with no attention to other aspects of the educational process.

Section 6.2.2 has explained the choices between the Western ‘sky’ and the Chinese ‘earth’ in terms of a dilemma for Chinese international students. To elaborate further on the radical pursuit of the Anglophone critical mode by students from China, the real significance of a choice based on material benefits needs careful thought. While from the point of view of an individual student the material value of the privileged Anglophone critical mode appears attractive, for many students the choice amounts to the embracing of a simulacrum that may not bring them the benefits they hope for. Furthermore, a collective assessment of the value of the trade of knowledge in international education reveals a tendency for Western education to market a form of education tailored to a self-reinforcing monolingual paradigm that welcomes numbers of foreign students while keeping the achievement of effective pedagogy well within cost-effective limits. This paradigm insists on acceptance of English and associated modes of critical thinking to the exclusion of cross-language confrontation by students and educators alike that may result in long-term cultural benefits. As Rancière (2009) argues, such students are ‘victims of a comprehensive structure of illusion, victims of [their] ignorance and resistance to an irresistible total process, the process of de-materialisation’ (2009, p. 31). Instead of emancipating themselves from the limitation of a materialised reality, they actively step into the trap by allowing the material value of English and Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking to direct their academia journey. Thus a radical pursuit in critical thinking may be found to contribute to an unequal platform that arrogates English and recourse to uniformly Western modes of critical analysis to superior status over Chinese language and Eastern critical knowledge. Clifford and Montgomery (2014) express concern that this end result of uniformization threatens to invent ‘a new form of colonialism’ (p. 35).
6.4.1 Attachment at a cost

This section examines implications of the radical pursuit of the Anglophone critical mode by Chinese international postgraduate students in relation to their interaction with institutions, by measuring it against the term of strangler fig mode of critical thinking, specifically, the stage of attaching. Chapter Five has elaborated the role of the institution as a system of values and beliefs in a particular social world that defines the appropriateness of actors’ perspectives and behaviour (Boltanski & Thevenot, 2009). The institution embodies power to discipline. Those who follow the logic of the institution can avoid the pressures of confrontation. Thus they acquire a sense of security, albeit perhaps a temporary security. Through a critical technique of attaching to the institution, they can expect to share the privileges accruing to this powerful entity.

In the present chapter, the English monolingual paradigm and the uniformization of Anglophone Western-centric theoretical knowledge are deemed to be embodied in an institutional entity, that is to say a virtual institution which administers the promotion of English and its associated modes of critical thinking. The students from China in radical pursuit of these values are convinced that it is appropriate to embrace this institutional administration, and they believe that in attaching themselves to this institution they will achieve equality in an Anglophone critical world, even sharing privileges such as a profitable academic career.

New to an environment of learning and research that is defined in Anglophone terms, Chinese international students initially consider themselves vulnerable through lack of familiarity with dominant perspectives and behaviours. They perceive that if they become sensitive to the preferred English language and critical thinking practices of this institution and acquire an ability to demonstrate their familiarity with them, they can access a primary vehicle to transport them into the institution. They believe that they will then participate in the dominant mode and share the privileges of this powerful institution. They radically pursue the Anglophone critical mode in order to obtain a certain power to liberate them from their vulnerable condition.
Yet to do so, these students from China pay little attention to employing the Chinese language and their home heritage critical resources in learning and research. In this way they disable their capabilities as Chinese critical thinkers. Moreover, in attaching themselves to the Anglophone critical institution, they transform themselves into persons that do not represent their own true nature, at the cost of any discomfort this transformation may bring. They achieve attachment to the promising high Western ‘sky,’ but they lose their standpoint and position on the bedrock of the Chinese ‘earth’. In this sense, another obstructive influence of strangler fig mode of critical thinking for students who studies in Western Anglophone education emerged - they lose themselves in the process of attaching.

Here the economic agenda described in the Literature Review comes into focus. International higher education will ‘embrace market-driven agendas to maximise financial returns’ in line with national economic interests (Clifford & Montgomery, 2014, p.38). The institution representing the English monolingual paradigm and the uniformization of Anglophone Western-centric theoretical knowledge, as noted in Section 6.4, constitutes the best-selling commodity of Anglophone universities with all the financial benefit that this brings to an education-exporting nation. Thus this institution not only embodies Anglophone universities’ most valued perceptions and practices, it also earns the funds to finance them. The Anglophone critical institution provides a distinct advantage by comparison with the educational system of competing non-Anglophone cultures. Admitting the languages and theoretical and critical resources from other cultures would reduce the competitive advantage of the best-selling Anglophone product; in accordance with this line of argument, Anglophone institution stakeholders, anxious to optimise their financial investment, will resist change in the existing Anglophone critical mode agenda. This underlying rationale plays a role in the radical pursuit of the institutional agenda to which Chinese international students attach themselves.

In Chinese postgraduate students’ attachment to the Anglophone critical institution, however, these students disengage from their Chinese language capacity and the critical resources deriving from their years of education in China. Instead of establishing a unique and comprehensive self, they consider attachment as their ultimate goal. Hence they tend to become replicas of their host. Under a Western
‘sky,’ they are locked into engagement with the well-defined social institution (Milgram, 1974, p.100) that they identify as providing future benefits. Yet given a relationship between thought and language, at a time in life when their intellectual capacity is developing by exposure to diversity culture and knowledge, they have lost their footing on the Chinese ‘earth.’

6.5 顶天立地 Ding tiān lì dì: a firmly based spirit of adventure

Students from China aspire to define themselves in the terms of the English monolingual critical mode presented to them, and they are eager to acquire Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking in English. Yet they must participate and express themselves exclusively in English, despite a still immature grasp of this second language and the lack of opportunity to optimise their Chinese educational background. Unquestionably, to be required to engage in critical thinking in and through English as a second language puts them in a disadvantaged position.

The dilemma arising out of the English monolingual paradigm and its associated critical thinking mode and theoretical framework has been given expression here in terms of gaining the Western sky and losing the Chinese earth. Following Yidiz (2012), the present section lays open the inherent tensions between the monolingual paradigm and the reality of the mind of students from China. It shows how it is possible to confront the conservative monolingual paradigm and uniform critical and theoretical framework, in order to offer students from China a positive alternative based on a principle of language plurality.

Dervin (2010) argues that intercultural competence is an ‘expected outcome of the insertion of interculturality in language learning and teaching’ (p.158). A postmonolingual countermove against the English monolingual paradigm and its inherent knowledge hierarchy can vindicate the presupposition of intellectual

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2 According to Lantolf, Thorne and Poehner (2015) ‘while students learn language, words not only function to isolate specific objects and actions, they also serve to reshape biological perception into cultural perception and concepts’ (p. 209).
equality (Rancière, 1991). Even if a postmonolingual approach is not able to dislodge the dominance of English and associated theoretical resources in commerce as well as scholarship, it can act in a supplementary capacity through multilingual, intercultural education (Song & Cadman, 2012). Postmonolingual education is able to open paths to histories and sources of creative intelligence globally as it balances monolingual knowledge production with interacting multilingual input (Yildiz, 2012: 6). For students from China, engaging the capacity for critical thinking in Chinese and then translating the output into English is a realisation of a postmonolingual supplement to the monolingual critical institution, and the cost of student attachment in an unequal situation that is resistant to change is addressed by pedagogies as set out in Sections 6.6.1 and 6.6.2. Here the intention is to show that engaging Chinese international postgraduate students as ‘intellectual subjects’ (Rancière, 1991)—embracing them as ‘knowers’ (Singh, 2010, 41)—unveils their capacities for critical intelligence.

6.5.1 Conceptualisation

Chinese concepts can be used as postmonolingual intellectual resources for critical thinking in Anglophone universities in innovative multilingual, intercultural classrooms. Specific material from Chinese can be used as postmonolingual supplements to permeate monolingual environments and create new aspects of literacy (Yildiz, 2012, p.15). For students from China, as also for speakers of other languages, such a postmonolingual approach in a new generation of multilingual, intercultural classrooms has the potential to manifest students’ divergent capabilities for critical thinking.

To address the dilemma in choosing between the Western ‘sky’ (天空 tiānkōng) and the Chiense ‘earth’ (大地 dàdì), this research employs an analogy using a Chinese proverbial phrase, 顶天立地 (dǐng tiān lì dì), literally ‘with the head high to sky/heaven, standing on the earth,’ or ’standing tall with feet firmly on the ground.’ The concept is one of bold independence, and the following commentary will show
how the phrase is interpreted in the present context to refer to ‘a firmly based spirit of adventure.’

Chinese international students have their educational background and intellectual resources to introduce concepts, taxonomic categories and images into dialogue within a multilingual, intercultural learning environment, along with metaphors and phrases that capture insights into human experience (Turner, 2010). Students with a second or foreign language capacity, whether domestic or international students, are able to allow their critical thinking to take from various knowledge sources and to allow the content of such sources to interact (Singh, 2013). The context of such bold independent participation in dialogue is of course significant.

6.5.2 Contextualisation

The radical pursuit of Anglophone critical education is likely to engender tensions caused by the monolingual paradigm and the pedagogic assumption of inequality. Students from China for example are pressed to choose either a Chinese or English academic stream, with the associated intellectual disposition, skills and critical habit of mind of the one chosen. If such students believe that they do in fact have to choose one or the other, and choose to study abroad, then acquiring professional knowledge in English will mean, at least for a lengthy period, distancing themselves from the Chinese language knowledge base they have already acquired, as well as possibly sacrificing professional links within China in the meantime. At the root of this dilemma is a lack of confidence by students in their capacity to maintain effective use of Chinese while studying and researching in an English language environment, or if they remain in China, to acquire and maintain an effective use of English while using Chinese in study and research. Here the dìng tiān lì dì concept provides an important analytical tool for thinking critically about international education in general and personal career choices in particular (Table 6.1).
Table 6.1: The potential of 顶天立地 dǐng tiān lì dì

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Contextualisation</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stand tall in the space between sky and earth</td>
<td>Cease agonising over a choice between either the Chinese or the Western paradigm and instead exert oneself to attain both</td>
<td>Critical thinking required to realise cross-language intercultural education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold up the heavens and stand firm on the earth</td>
<td>Enable bilingual students—both domestic and international—to access conceptual knowledge from a pool of multiple languages and intellectual cultures</td>
<td>Pedagogies to mobilise multilingual, intercultural education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be fearless</td>
<td>Be confident of one’s intellectual capabilities and bravely demonstrate the potential of one’s diverse linguistic resources</td>
<td>Co-production of linguistic and theoretical tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be an honest person</td>
<td>Be intellectually honest in one’s academic field</td>
<td>Provides emotional support to confront insistent monolingualism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations from academic sources regarding the academic performance of Chinese international students, along with evidence adduced in this thesis, show that logical construction of English sentences is a common problem (Liu, 2007; Zhao & McDougall, 2008). This indicates that whatever general reasoning a student might have towards a critical issue, his or her concentration is likely to be divided between
reasoning out a solution and, at the same time, thinking of how to analyse the content of the English question and how to construct a verbal response in English. In an examined exercise in critical thinking, although there is evidence that second language writers will often use their first language, there is also evidence that students are told, and also personally believe, that it is best to try to abandon their first language in favour of English. This then is an indication that the monolingual paradigm influences critical thinking, and at the same time it is an affirmation of anthropological research showing the obstructive influence a monolingual paradigm can produce for Chinese international students (Shohamy, 2011; Ryan & Viete, 2009).

Meanwhile the degree of difficulty experienced by second language speakers in general may well not be fully realised by monolingual speakers of English, particularly since knowledge of a second language does not imply the advantages that English—as the primary international language—has for speakers of other languages.

The above evidence combines with interview excerpts and observation of the academic performance of Chinese international students to illustrate the position in which they find themselves in accepting the monolingual paradigm of academic study in an English language environment. In this position they plainly struggle to fully access the full resources of the dominant language and engage with challenges in critical thinking. Their situation is completely different from that of an English-speaking young person, with all the lexical and grammatical resources of the English language, who aspires to critical expertise at university level. Students from China have largely already attained a certain level within a very different critical tradition, and similarly have acquired the lexical and grammatical expertise appropriate to that tradition. But now in accepting a parallel monolingual tradition they find they not only have to jettison their Chinese learning but be made to feel that it no longer matters. As they find that accessing their Chinese language resources is not a feasible option, they may become aware of being perceived as products of an inferior

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3 See interview transcript of Hai and Jin in section 6.2.4.
4 See critical works of Meng (2012) and Qi (2015). In their research, they engaged Chinese modes of critical thinking in Chinese language research as theoretical tools to analyse educational matter, and provide alternative to these matters, in English.
5 See interview transcript of Jin in section 6.2.1 and Chen in section 6.2.2.
6 See interview transcript of Cai in section 6.2.2 and Qiu in section 6.2.4.
education system. This gives rise to the myth of inequality associated with the monolingual paradigm. A challenge for these students, regarded as ‘uncritical thinkers,’ may be to critically assess such judgements.

This thesis asserts that tolerance for other cultures is a desirable attribute. For students from China this is at least demonstrated in very general terms by their desire to acquire English and associated critical skills and theoretical knowledge. At the same time however this thesis questions whether the monolingual English tradition in Australia is fully aware of the need for effective approaches to the education of a significant body of international students. It is easy to say that students from China are ‘uncritical,’ and that this is because of their home country educational system did not teach critical thinking skills, as if what is needed may be a ‘static body of knowledge’ package (Liddicoat & Kohler, 2012, p.76) that is acquirable in a Western environment.

Yet ultimately a pedagogy of intellectual equality should acknowledge that students can be encouraged to use their own language and cultural tradition to interface with their studies of English and the Western tradition, thereby achieving deeper and more effective learning; and also that the teachers of such a pedagogy should strive to move out of an introverted Western knowledge of its own tradition and know an Other world ‘characterised by its epistemological diversity and its dialogic possibility’ (Cadman & Song, 2012, p.5). They may also achieve a perception of its own critical workings that may accord more with the perceptions of their foreign students. Their students may ‘enrich the awareness and thereby the effectiveness of the supervisor in the process’ (McCarthy, 2012, p.50). There is also the prospect that students from China may through cross-language insights make valuable original contributions to the global pool of English-vehicle knowledge.

6.6 Conclusion to Chapter Six

This chapter in addressing a construction of Chinese international postgraduate students as uncritical and disengaged in their studies has demonstrated the existence
of a radical pursuit of an English-only approach to Western critical thinking and theoretical knowledge. The chapter explains the difficulties such students face by comparison with native speakers of English in a university environment, particularly as these international students have to virtually abandon active involvement with their Chinese language educational experience. In gaining the Western sky, they have lost the Chinese earth. In another conceptual framework, 顶天立地 (dǐng tiān lì dì), however, students from China can learn to confidently and creatively cross over from one linguistic tradition to the other and apply Chinese language concepts and critical thinking modes in their English language learning and research. Thus through focusing on the potential capabilities of Chinese international students rather than their shortcomings to date, a cross-language approach can draw out meanings, images and even theories from a Chinese intellectual heritage in order to supplement and diversify their critiques in terms of English vocabulary, Western theories and Western frameworks.
CHAPTER SEVEN

SYNTHEISING CRITICAL THINKING IN LEARNING AND RESEARCH

7.0 Introduction

Chapter Six has shown how both the radical pursuit of critical thinking and linear communication subsist within international education, and how implicit in theoretic-linguistic frameworks there are possible alternatives to simply struggling against an intellectual inequality (Rancière, 1991). This chapter examines modes of critical thinking found expression in Chinese postgraduate students’ perspectives and experiences to inform a more balanced reciprocal approach in learning and teaching and in research. In doing so, it expects to provide insights into the extending of Chinese postgraduate students' capabilities for critical thinking and also contribute to Australian-Chinese knowledge co-production.

Research on the transformation of Chinese international students’ critical thinking into Anglophone Western-centric theoretic-linguistic frameworks has lent insights to this study (Singh & Qi, 2013; Singh & Chen, 2012). The present chapter analyses data generated from interviews with postgraduate students from China and their educators, focusing on reinforcing students’ modes of critical thinking in cross-language intercultural educational environments. The analysis attests to a positive critical interaction between the following paired actor groups: (1) Chinese international students and intercultural study settings; (2) the existing Chinese theoretic-linguistic framework and a new Western/English framework that Chinese students will need to confront critically; (3) Chinese international students and their Western English-speaking educators; and (4) the Chinese theoretical-linguistic knowledge system and its Western English counterpart system. In opposition to the radical pursuit of critical thinking documented in Chapter Six, this chapter sets out a valid synthesis in critical thinking. Theoretical conceptual instruments employed are critical emancipation (Fay, 1987; Rancière, 2009), a pedagogy of intellectual
equality (Rancière, 1991); divergence and dialogue (Jullien, 2014); double knowing (Singh & Schresta, 2008); and the postmonolingual condition (Yildiz 2012).

7.1 Extending critical thinking

Education raises students’ critical consciousness to enlighten, empower and emancipate themselves (Fay 1987), and Australian tertiary educational environments with their basis in critical thinking are of considerable value to students from China. While Chinese international students are already endowed with a critical thinking capacity, it should be the task of university educators to be expected optimise the practice of critical analytic performance, and this thesis has argued that this should occur through unleashing students’ existing modes of critical thinking through pedagogies of intellectual equality (Rancière, 1991). The universities have made clear their goal of sharing critical thinking approaches with students from China (Goode, 2007; Tran, 2013). Among students from China there is a desire for emancipation in critical thinking, and this evident in the interviewee responses set out in Table 7.1 below.
### Table 7.1: Extending critical thinking in Australian universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidentiary excerpt</th>
<th>Changed perception of critical thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I used to think critical thinking was mostly about criticism. But listening to educator and peer discussion has helped me to gain a better understanding of critical thinking—it also includes different angles of exploring things, summarisation and innovation. Critical thinking is a big concept (Aus-Cai).</td>
<td>Enlightened with a better understanding of the concept of critical thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think the critical thinking skill that [Australian] universities teach is valuable. It helps us to have a more comprehensive perspective when examining one [particular] issue (Aus-Lai).</td>
<td>Enlightened with a need for a comprehensive perspective in examining particular issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking skill, how should I say this, is only a skill to me. Australian university teaches me skill, or more accurately, an outline maybe? …I know that thinking only from one angle is not enough, and if I am asked, I can provide different angles to looking into a problem, and maybe raise more problems. But I always have this tendency…the tendency of thinking of one issue from the most deeply embedded perspective… After [training] I would look at the issue from different angles…The training…implanted an idea in me, that I cannot think of an issue just from a single angle…This thinking habit is more like a mechanism. <em>It suppresses the tendency of linear thinking and speeds up a second-angled perspective</em>…My critical thinking training enhanced this mechanism (Aus-Hai).</td>
<td>Empowered with an enhanced mechanism to activate existing multi-angled perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is not as if they repeat some outline for you to understand and learn. It is more like the way they act when they present an analysis of a problem to you. After a time you will gradually become familiar with this skill. <em>My ideas might be there, but I didn't go there</em> when I started thinking. Because normally <em>I would be satisfied</em></td>
<td>1. Enlightened with a need for sophisticated discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Empowered with</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
with having an opinion and that is enough. I would be like this: I have an idea already, so when people talk about it I could engage with their conversation… But after being constantly exposed to a critical thinking based environment, I found I knew how to prepare myself to have more than one perspective… I know this was able to deepen my conversation with others… rather than just stay at the surface level (Aus-Qin).

When I was still in China…when my students come to me with a problem, I would tell them how to solve it… If they had different opinions that I think are not relevant, I would tell them: You are wrong, and I will tell you the right solution. But after doing research in Australia I learnt how to think critically, and how to look at a problem from different angles. Now when my students express opinions to me that are different from what I thought, I will encourage them maintain these opinions of theirs and try to help them dig further… I am not only their teacher… I treat them as my peers (Aus-Jin).

1. Enlightened with different pedagogical angles
2. Empowered with the Pedagogies of intellectual equality

Some students from China struggle with ways of thinking and writing critically in Australian universities (Chapter Six). However, others are glad of the new possibilities that are offered by an environment that promotes critical thinking. Table 7.1 indicates that after being exposed to such an environment, students may change their perceptions of critical thinking and thereby become more sophisticated in their critical understanding of concepts, in their critical ability in argument, and in critical pedagogy. Singh et al. (2013) argue that ‘there is no reason why [critical thinking] should be seen as progressive, let alone emancipatory’ (p. 13) — yet surely the above student comments are evidence of the role of critical thinking in a process that amounts to an emancipatory transformation.

Hai describes her capacity for critical thinking metaphorically as a 'mechanism,' perhaps an interpretation of critical thinking in terms of an emancipatory engine. She has already possessed this mechanism, but has tended to neglect its potential for
self-direction and awareness of other perspectives. Exposure to a critical environment has enhanced this mechanism, helping her to bridge the disconnect between multiple perspectives and arguments. The environment has not taught Hai how to think critically; rather it has helped her to discover her critical capacity.

Qin achieved a similar emancipatory outcome. He used to think confidently in terms of ‘having an opinion and that is enough.’ However, through observing the way his teachers analysed matters critically in contrast to his own thinking, he has begun to realise that he has been quite self-satisfied. In line with the description of emancipation by Rancière (2009) - as a process of ‘dismantling of the old distribution of what could been seen, thought and done’ and ‘feeding on multiplications’ (p. 47) - Qin has come to see the need for ‘more than one perspective,’ and converse beyond a ‘surface level.’ Qin definitely sees this not as something specifically taught, but as a capacity achieved through pedagogical enlightenment through intellectual discussions on an equal basis. This accords with Rancière's (1991) pedagogy of intellectual equality. Qin’s teachers had shown respect to him by engaging him in scholarly discussion, appealing to his critical and productive thinking. These students’ critical emancipation was manifest in their understanding and practices of critical pedagogy.

Jin, an educator in China and currently a research student with some teaching responsibilities in Australia, also appreciates the value of the pedagogies of intellectual equality she had experienced. Her original presumption of being intellectually superior to her students has been reshaped by her research experience in a critical thinking based learning environment. She now sees the importance of allowing her students to have different opinions, and actively going deeper. Her teacher as authority mindset has been transformed into a more equal and democratic teacher/student relationship.
7.1.1 Divergence

Chapter Six has shown how the radical pursuit of critical thinking can inhibit the emergence of an equal but divergent critical thinking through culture and knowledge structure. The present chapter now explores how *divergence* (Jullien, 2014) and critical thinking can interact in a positive fashion.

Jullien (2014) sees *divergence* in critical culture and knowledge exchange lying ‘not in compromise, but in comprehension’ (p.141). He sees embracing the plurality of cultures as a way to maintain a balance of power between cultures, so as to avoid a radical pursuit towards a material value of culture. The following interview excerpts demonstrate how in opening up a culturally divergent perspective, authentic intercultural experience deepen and expand the critical mindset of Chinese international students.

My views changed, and could also become stronger. I had seen different possibilities so I knew I should expect different possibilities, and explore them. My ideas were just strengthened in a positive way. Because I have a more open mind to various different kinds of culture, ideas and religion (Aus-Hai).

You would think, if it was Australians, what would they think about this? What about Koreans?... *Being able to observe people from different culture* from such a close distance has given me new perspectives on them, their culture and national identity…and discussing these observations with friends sometimes evoke resonance or different opinions. *This makes me think I am on a more mature level of thinking* (Aus-Li).

My view on race has changed... Through university study I have encountered people from different races. The colour of their skin may be different… and their ideas, perspective and standpoint will be quite different, yet everyone is equal and respected. *I start to see everyone for their outstanding points…and even accept ‘weird’ ideas.* This kind of experience really changes the way you think… (Aus-Lin)

These responses show the interviewees' understanding of *divergence*: no intellectual categories will necessarily be identical; something new is always possible. Hai realises she should expect to see ‘*different kinds of culture, ideas and religion.*’ Li begins to compare culturally varied standpoints of other people. Lin notices respect for different races and ideas in her learning environment and begins to express such respect in her critical encounters with others. *Divergence* affords these Chinese...
international students an escape from their most deeply embedded constraints of fixed cultural and national imagination. It liberates them from restrictive definitions and opens windows onto critical thought.

The insight into themselves and their situation is the key by which to effect the personal change which underpins the social transformations required for their emancipation’ (Fay, 1987, p.151).

The three students all identified a change to their mindset, as if empowered with a more divergent and flexible attitude to contend with ‘different possibilities’ (Aus-Hai), even ‘weird ideas’ (Lin). It is fair to conclude that a divergent intercultural encounter that welcomes the multiple dimensions of nation, culture and people is conducive to greater critical emancipation.

7.1.1.1 Critiquing the critical thinking concept

Going on from divergence to extend the scope of critical thinking, this section records comments of students as they critically examine a concept and so opening fresh perspectives. The section thus shows how critical thinking in confronting divergence actually advances it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cross-language critique of the critical thinking concept</th>
<th>Perceptions of the critical thinking concept</th>
<th>Feature of individual critical thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X: What do you really mean by 'critical thinking' in Chinese</td>
<td>1. The literal translation of 'critical thinking' in Chinese</td>
<td>Engenders an inner argument on personal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
critical thinking?

L: Maybe 思辨能力 (sībiàn nènglì) 'capacity for thinking/making distinctions; judgement'?

X: Ah, then it makes more sense. Critical thinking always sounds a little cynical… you know? As if people are hostile and are prepared to criticise… As if they are a very suspicious audience… But it actually carries more senses than that. I know we use the term, 批判性思维 (pīpàn xìng sīwéi, a literal translation of 'critical thinking'), but I prefer the term 思辨能力 (sībiàn nènglì). You see it covers more meaning than a simply 'criticism' -- 思 sī, 'thinking' and 辨 biàn 'distinguishing, making judgement.' I believe this is what 'critical thinking' really means in English. The term critical thinking may have specific meaning to English-speaking people who understand the deeper meaning behind the words, but for me as a non-English-speaking person, unlike the direct expression sībiàn does not represent the comprehensive meaning of the concept in English.

2. The literal Chinese translation of 'critical thinking' carries a sense of hostility.

3. The term 'critical thinking' can be better understood using the translated term 思辨能力 (sībiàn nènglì).

4. The deep/comprehensive meaning of 'critical thinking' may be clear to English-speaking people.

5. A non-English-speaking person may be unable to perceive the comprehensive meaning of 'critical thinking' just by understanding the understanding of the concept.

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1 The investigator.
2 The translation of 'critical thinking' as 思辨能力 (sībiàn nènglì) is debatable. The main characteristic of 思辨 (sībiàn) is the presentation of rational and progressive analysis in clear and appropriate language. However, in the field of philosophy, this concept is regarded as a thinking process with little relation to reality. As a philosophical term, 思辨 (sībiàn) can be considered as a scientific methodology. It sets out a hypothesis and uses logical explanation to verify the truth or falsity of the hypothetical statement. As long as the logical explanation can be justified, the hypothesis can be regarded as true. However, the use of 思辨 as a scientific method can lead to a paradox where although the logic is perfectly rational and logical, the allegedly true hypothesis can be proven false in reality -- as for instance in Zeno’s paradoxes. Nevertheless the student in the interview employed the term 思辨 in reference to the ordinary practice of critical thinking practice within the field of education, and thus avoided any abstruse philosophical implications.
**nénglì**, the meaning of the term *critical thinking* is not immediately clear (Chi-Xia).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The word critical also means 'very important, crucial' in English, isn't that right? So can we see that English-speaking people regard critical thinking as a habitual practice of thinking about what is crucial in their lives? (Chi-Bai)</th>
<th>The word critical in the concept of critical thinking also implies it is a crucial thinking capability</th>
<th>Draws connections to open up new paths to understanding.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am thinking, why do people think the term 'critical thinking' includes creative thinking? The concept has no indication of 'creative.' So when you say Western educators criticise Chinese students as being uncritical, do they mean Chinese students do not have capabilities to create new things, or do they think Chinese students cannot make choices by themselves? Because if they think Chinese students cannot make choices, well...[smiling sardonically]...they are either not looking or they are deceived (Chi-Bao).</td>
<td>1. The term critical thinking does not specifically include reference to creativity. 2. Through refining the meaning of the concept, to focus on the possibility of over-simplified characterising Chinese students as uncritical</td>
<td>Distinguishes the complexity of the concept and questions its alleged over-simplified use.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above illustration of three students’ understanding and critical interpretation of the concept of critical thinking may give rise to discussion on (1) the convergence of concept but divergence in meaning and (2) divergence between the concept and its use.

To take the first point, convergence of concept but divergence in meaning, the debate focus on the concept of critical thinking in English. To test the possible meanings of the concept, each student asked critical questions. Xia used a Chinese concept of
思辨能力 (offered by the investigator) to explain 'critical thinking.' Xia’s elaboration of the Chinese concept through determining an alternative translation demonstrated a process of critical thinking that was able in turn to distinguish a further sense of the English concept. He is concerned that literal translation of 'critical thinking' would not convey the true meaning of the term to a Chinese audience. For his part, Bao responded to Western educators’ characterisation of Chinese students as uncritical by asking if this meant they lacked creativity or the capacity to make independent choices. If this was what was meant, it was clearly wrong. The claim of uncritical Chinese students has irritated Bao. His sardonic smile is a sceptical disapproval of a stereotyped impression of Chinese students.

Concepts are ‘essentially contested’ issues, where their proper meaning and use ‘inevitably involves endless disputes’ (Gallie, 1956, p. 2). A critical educational concept is expected to capture the density of the multiple issues and practices that are included in the field of education (Qi, 2015). In the above evidentiary comment, students discuss the concept of critical thinking in different contexts to validate divergence between meaning and use, and Bao responds sharply to what he regarded as insinuations of indecisiveness and lack of creativity.

In communicating a concept globally, Subreenduth (2010) promotes a more complex construct than simply a binary insider-outsider opposition. The concept of critical thinking may have favourable connotations within an English-speaking Western community, but to students from China a critical interpretation of the concept from outside such a community might be seen as ‘border-crossing,’ to use Clifford and Montgomery’s term (2014, p.37). Subedi (2010) argues that this mode of critical intervention in education aims to ‘unsettle the hegemony of dominant ways of reading the world’ (p.15) as it struggles against the structured meaning and use of defined Anglophone concepts and works towards a context-sensitive perspective. In this way, critical thinking practices of students from China can contribute to divergence in the field of verifying educational concepts.
7.1.2 Double knowing and its limitations

The notion of *double knowing* (Singh & Shrestha, 2008), the instrument chosen here to analyse critical interaction, is empowered by the access of Chinese international students to the resources of both the English and Chinese languages. *Double knowing* invites a variety of equally valid narratives to co-exist within a learning environment that is expansively holistic, based on the assumption that intelligence is equal and knowledge can be pluralised (Singh & Shrestha, 2008). Chinese international students generally navigate between their background and new linguistic knowledge, sometimes drawing close to one and sometimes the other. As opposed to the radical pursuit of critical thinking, *double knowing* is central in advancing multiplicity and complexity of concepts, theories and critiques. It ‘openly engages international students’ knowledge as well as the knowledge networks they can access’ (Singh & Shrestha, 2008, p.73). Access to two linguistically networked knowledge systems, namely English and Chinese, provides a significant platform for students to construct a pluralised critical interpretation of one particular issue (Table 7.3).

**Table 7.3: Double knowing extends critical thinking**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bilingual double knowing of concepts</th>
<th>Extending of critical thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When I first heard of the word <em>discourse</em>, I felt a bit lost. I looked it up in English dictionary—because you know, teachers encourage us to understand an English word through the English explanation, which said the word means conversation, talk, speech, dissertation and something else I cannot remember. I thought I had understood the word so I left it and did not go any further. But I still had not got my head around it. I didn’t quite understand when my fellow students used the word in certain places. What is discourse? Is it materials, stories lines, ideas, or more? Why did they use this word in this context? So I went to the English-Chinese dictionary, which said the word means 谈话，语篇，演讲，正式的讨论 (conversation, (linguistic] text, speech, formal argument or discussion). Then I understood and began to accept the broad meaning of this word. Because before I had looked it up in</td>
<td>1. Better understanding of the concept;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. More awareness of the broader meaning of the concept;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Confidence in personal understanding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I was actually not so familiar with the concept of critical thinking here... But based on my understanding if I were to think of a phrase to describe Chinese mode of critical thinking, I would use ‘尽信书不如无书’ (Jìn xìn shū bù rú wú shū) ‘It would be better to be short of books than believe everything in books.’ referring to sources of knowledge in general. To explain this concept in English, we can say it relates to scepticism, selective choices, challenges to teacher-centric education, challenges to authorities, and challenges to classical literature. These English representations of the meaning of Chinese concept may thus imply more possibilities than the original English concept of critical thinking. If we translate the resulting terms back into Chinese, they might in turn mean different things as well (Aus-Tao).

Here students’ critical approach to an unfamiliar English concept is to use their bilingual capability to seek Chinese language resources to supplement any unclear elements in their understanding of the concept that might be due to lack of authentic linguistic and cultural experience. At this point their own heritage lends valuable insights. Hai finds that bilingual exploration of 'discourse' consolidates her understanding of the concept in line with her capacity for learning and critical thinking. Tao uses a Chinese concept to explain an English concept and then re-examines the Chinese concept. Promising new possibilities emerged during the process, and no doubt more will continue to emerge. This opens seemingly unlimited investigation opportunities for her to make sense of concepts between two knowledge systems.

Double knowing has been identified as an inclusive pedagogy to facilitate students’ cross-language critical thinking capabilities. It can ‘transform…indigenous knowledge from a possible barrier to the transmission of Eurocentric wisdom into
alternative insights that can be identified and harvested in the classroom’ (Tange & Kastberg, 2013, p.4). Such a transformation process is underpinned by skill in critically engaging and interpreting relational information to achieve a re-conceptualisation. In international education the explicit use of such a procedure will be a valuable way for students and teachers alike to approach ‘cross-cultural challenges’ explicit (Singh, et al., 2013, p. 3).

Since students who know a second language are capable of engaging in parallel intellectual framework, a question emerges: will this phenomenon influences the knowledge frameworks? Or ‘what happens to knowledge when it is given a wholly new voice and context’ (Montgomery, 2000, p. 4)?

[International students from China] translate English to Chinese and then think of things in Chinese, and after that translate this thinking back to English. This implies an extension of existing knowledge to gain more critical and more culturally sophisticated perspectives. This thinking process combine both language and information resources to spontaneously blends two different kinds of knowledge, in order to create something new, something that is neither Chinese nor Western. This process may well prove to be more productive than thinking in one knowledge system alone (Aus-e-Wen).

Here cross-language double knowing process constitutes a new critical perspective for thinking. For Jullien (2014), this type of translation forces students to elaborate alternatives in two different knowledge frameworks, in order to ‘render [concepts, theories, critiques] available to the eventuality of another meaning, or at least to be taken into other ramifications’ (p. 161). Jullien considers this process to be ‘the only possible ethic’ of the coming divergence of culture and knowledge (p.161). By this logic, Chinese speaking students would then have an advantage over monolingual English speakers in terms of critical thinking. Yet surely the level of knowledge of each language must play a key role.

Despite the fact that double knowing renders divergence visible through Chinese international student engagement using a cross-language capability, there are unresolved issues with the approach. Double knowing approaches divergence through student use of Chinese in their English language learning and research environment. Yet the use of the student's first language in second language learning is a controversial issue. Huang (2012) encourages students and educators from China
to use English as much as they can in English based critical learning environments, in order to reinforce English as a language for thinking. Cai (2010) argue that using Chinese to think in an English context will detract from the value of the English learning environment. Evans and Morrison (2011) report that interviewed students find translation of learning content ‘time-consuming and ineffective’ (p. 205). These arguments need to be kept in mind, but nevertheless considered from the point of view of critical thinking that is central to this thesis. At the same time there is another stream of opinion in the literature to the effect that use of the first language not only helps students to extend their critical thinking capabilities through interrelating their two language frameworks but also prevents students feeling lost (Krieger, 2005; Zhao, 2013; Singh & Han, 2010). There are also concerns that the Chinese cultural heritage is rendered mute in universities, even in China, through the privileging of English and its associated critical thinking modes (Song & Xiao, 2009).

The aim in promoting double knowing in Australia is to provide alternatives for Chinese international postgraduate students to give free rein to their capacity for critical thinking in a divergent learning and researching environment. The value of double knowing lies not in its provision of vocabulary equivalents but its role as a resource for Chinese international students to investigate, interpret, and verify English concepts and theories. Double knowing can enable a student to use critical thinking in extracting and combining available resources to achieve a sophisticated level of scholarly argument that reflects knowledge of the nuances of the language in which the argument is written.

7.2 Explicating the critical thinking process

The above analysis has shown that the students selected for interview are capable of opposition to a Western Anglophone view of Chinese international students as lacking a critical thinking capacity. This raises the question of why students from China lead their English-speaking Western educators to doubt their critical thinking capabilities. An Australian educator shed light on this question through her experience of working with Chinese international students:
It is really not a lack of capability, but not knowing how to perform. Local students know how to speak in class. They know how to voice themselves, sometimes even if it is through repetition and summary of what educator talked about. But Chinese students don’t know how to voice their views. In China students normally answer when they are asked. When the students engage in one-to-one discussions, you notice that they are not lacking in critical thinking…But most Chinese students don't want to attract everyone’s attention to themselves. They may feel uncomfortable to be the focus of public attention (Aus-e-Wen).

Wen’s critical interpretation of Chinese international students, that they simply lack experience in showing critical thinking in public, is in contrast to the lack of critical knowledge attributed to them in the literature (Asmar, 2005; Egege & Kutieleh, 2004; Clark & Gieve, 2006). Wen’s view is that students from China tend to have introverted critical thinking, and may feel ‘uncomfortable’ in allowing the whole class to witness such a thinking process. Singh et al. (2013) argue that a conservative mode of critical thinking may ‘reduce [student] efforts in pursuit of self-interest’ (p.3). Yan and Berliner (2011b) report that some students from China felt ‘stressed’ and ‘overwhelmed’ when they had to speak in an environment where they considered Anglophone peers ‘overrepresented’ and where ‘English is the predominant language’ (p.537). These arguments support Wen’s view that students from China are less likely to give voice to critical thinking in front of an audience, especially a large audience, but they demonstrate critical thinking during one-to-one critical discussions with their supervisors.

It is reviewed in chapter two that the criticism to students from China of being uncritical is correlated with their silent learning strategy in class (Clark & Gieve, 2006; Tran, 2013), since this Confucius cultural defined learning strategy causes them to underperform in critical discussions in class. But this correlation between the silent learning strategy and less critical engagement in discussion certainly does not determine the outcome for these students from China of being unable to thinking critically. An example of a seemingly uncritical international Chinese student’s critical academic achievement is offered by one Australian educator:

"Chinese students’ silence in class cannot be taken at face value…Their conventional learning strategy is to listen to the lecturer and then they ask questions after class, and when they get responses to their questions they would leave. During this process they might not perform in a lot of..."
discussions. But it really doesn’t mean they do not have the capability. I had this one quiet Chinese student. He didn’t really engage much in class and he took notes of a lot of slides… I was a little worried about him. Sometimes I would stand next to him to say to the whole class, ‘If anyone has question, I welcome you to come and ask me, and we can work together’—this talk was actually targeting him. He didn’t come… The first time they did their assessment I asked him how much he got. He told me he got 41 out of 50. I wasn’t the one to mark him—another English-speaking peer did… I asked to have a look at his essay. His critical thinking was rather active and his critical language was quite clear. If it had been me, I would have given him a similar score. I asked him why he wasn’t more active in class, and he said he was not really familiar with this way. For this student, if we only took his performance in class we might very likely conclude he was unwilling to engage, or even not thinking critically enough. However, his assessment suggested otherwise. So I believe some educators’ criticism that Chinese students do not engage, or are not willing to engage, need to be discussed further. Western students and educators may promote more explicit engagement, while Asian students may engage more implicitly. It might be a result of the fact that they are not used to the strategy of knowledge sharing as Westerners are (Aus-e-Han).

Han argued that presumed inability of students from China to engage critically in class cannot be taken at face value: a students’ silence in class does not necessarily imply an unsatisfactory academic outcome in terms of critical thinking. Her interview transcript refers to Chinese students’ unfamiliarity with knowledge sharing. According to Yan and Berliner (2011a), students from China are ‘reluctant to initiate a conversation with their professors,’ as they are ‘unsure of the norms of professor-student interaction and relationship’ (p.180). Han’s student apparently withdrew from critical interaction in the classroom and outside. Even given a specific hint, this student still did not carry out critical interaction as she hoped. There was one point at which Han was ‘worried’ about this student’s capabilities for critical thinking. However, this very same student’s critical assessment presented the critical thinking capabilities which can bring high academic achievement in critical learning and research in Australia. The student clearly possessed an inner critical thinking, and the assessment showed that he understood how to communicate this thinking in writing. Yet without that assessment his lack of critical engagement in class would have suggested a lack of critical thinking ability. Han’s example provides a more perceptive insight into students’ capabilities for critical thinking. Even if a student’s underperformance in critical discussion leads to the assumption of his or her being
unable to think and act critically, the same student can still achieve high critical academic results.

Being intelligent in critical thinking but not appearing to be so, or not being recognised to be so, is the main issue for Chinese international students that emerges from the above interview material. Han’s example shows that even when a student from China has critical capability, such talent was still likely to be misunderstood. Having this issue in mind, the question becomes: how to help students avoid this kind of misinterpretation? Both Wen and Han referred to a silent, implicit learning and thinking process among Chinese international students. It is a major obstacle that these students face in presenting themselves as critical actors to Australian educators.

An implicit engagement in the classroom, or an implicit approach in academic writing, is not beneficial for Chinese students. Academia needs clear arguments and a very clear process of reasoning, because reasoning and learning involve a process of explicating implicitity. *If a student approaches one implicit entity with another implicit entity, the academic argument will be very unclear.* And such an approach might give Westerners a false impression of Chinese students’ lack of critical thinking skills, even though sometimes these students might in fact know more than their Australian peers because they can access two different knowledge systems. From this a conclusion is that students need one-to-one discussion with their supervisor to find an appropriate, positive and productive way to *explicate their implicit thinking* and advance their academic arguments and reasoning, with the aid of their intercultural perspectives (Aus-e-Wen).

From the above set of interview transcripts there emerges advice focusing on rational transmission by students from China, to the effect that students should explicate their implicit critical thinking process, make the ratiocination explicit, and render it salient. Such a transmission of reasoning should focus on critically oriented dialogue between students and educators in order to find an ‘appropriate, optimistic and productive way’ of engaging in critical thinking. The standpoint developed here sees students from China as not being deficient in their intelligence for the critical, and calls for assistance for them to clearly recognise such intelligence and dynamically implement this faculty. This pedagogical approach respects Rancière’s presupposition of *intellectual equality*, and supports students to discover the potential that rests within them. It brings out the need of educators and students to work together as equals. Wen has specifically noted have particular cross-language and
intercultural capabilities of Chinese international students. It will be of considerable value to render these advantages visible.

So far, this chapter has explored the expansion and manifestation of Chinese postgraduate students’ capabilities for critical thinking, with an emphasis on the interaction between critical thinking, divergence and double knowing. Underlying all this is the challenge to take these students’ critical knowledge and their cross-system knowledge networks and make this implicitly known information explicit, so that it will inform pedagogical structures. Singh and Shrestha (2008) argue that the access to ‘multilingual knowledge networks is silenced,’ giving students from China ‘a sense that such knowledge is of no account’ (p.72). Thus this knowledge and these networks are still underestimated and underemployed in Western-centric Anglophone education (Singh & Han, 2016). Tange (2010) claims ‘the more experienced lecturers present a more positive view on student diversity [divergence]’ (p.145). Considering the beneficial licence of double entry to two different theoretico-linguistic frameworks, the demonstration of Chinese international students’ capabilities for critical thinking can be expected to be revealed and enhanced with respect to their unique cross-language and intercultural critical potential.

7.3 A postmonolingual approach

To pursue the explication of critical thinking of students from China through dialogue (Jullien, 2014), this section explores a postmonolingual (Yildiz, 2012) approach. Increasing attention has been drawn to international students’ ‘multilingual’ potential (Doiz et al., 2013; Ochoa, 2010), realised of course by students from China in Australia as a capacity in both Chinese as first language and English as second language, that may be conveniently and accurately described as a cross-language ability that is vital to double knowing, while ‘multilingual’ refers to the generality of a diverse set of different first languages across the body of international students in Australia. Yildiz (2012) writes that so far the existence of a multilingual paradigm as opposed to the monolingual paradigm is still a myth. She suggests a postmonolingual approach to indicate a ‘back-and-forth movement’
between the monolingual tendency and a multilingual tendency, bringing to the fore the ‘visibility of othernesses’ (p. 68). In the case of the present research, the visibility of otherness is designated by using Chinese concepts, ideas and theories in English and its associated critical thinking-based learning and research, where audiences can clearly distinguish their other-language origin. The movement between two separate paradigms then creates a virtual dialogue in students’ critical thinking. Ravenscroft (2011) suggested dialogue to be a primary mean to ‘maintain and exploit connection’ as well as ‘develop knowledge production’ (p.139,140). Exploring postmonolingual practices of Chinese international students in an Australian learning and research environment has resulted in critical dialogue in multiple dimensions comprising 1) personal knowledge frameworks; b) interaction between students and educators; c) interaction between two knowledge systems.

In an interview a Chinese international student researching teaching practices reported on a postmonolingual approach that assists her to think and perform critically:

The mode (of critical thinking) I engaged is 深入浅出 (shēn rù qiǎn chū)\(^3\). I believe I am not simply showing [students] the things I know that they don’t, I also have to present the things I know in a way they understand, a way they would be interested in. So for me I have to blend my previous knowledge and their lived experiences. This is 深入 (shēn rù), to interpret information from cross-cultural angle; and then 浅出 (qiǎn chū), to present the processed information in a way that appeals to them… When my mindset presents such a 包容 (baorong) ‘inclusive’ manner, I discover things that had not been so obvious to me before (Aus-Lin).

According to this evidentiary excerpt, Lin was aware of the ways to take Chinese mode of critical thinking into account through a postmonolingual approach, employing theoretical guidance through making explicit a Chinese concept. Here a double knowing perspective helps to combine the resources she gained from two different theoretic-linguistic knowledge systems and therefore perceive the route to a cross-language paradigm. She identified the purpose of the cultural and academic communication she wanted to conduct with Australians, and recognised the valuable

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\(^3\)深入浅出 Shēn rù qiǎn chū: shēn 深 ‘deep’; rù 入 ‘enter’; qiǎn 浅 ‘shallow’; chū 出 ‘to exit.’ This term means ‘to explain (a) profound theory/knowledge in simple and plain language’. In this case, the student transferred this concept and modified the meaning to cope with the challenge she faced in an Australian educational environment.
and indeed essential platform provided by her cross-language and intercultural resources. Needing to be responsive to the local context, in the light of this Chinese mode of critical thinking she translated the teaching materials and transferred their content, blending it with Western audiences’ lived experience, in order to unveil Chinese in ways that would evoke understanding and resonance in an Anglophone educational environment.

In applying a postmonolingual approach, Lin performed a process of negotiation in her critical thinking, that is, to initiate dialogue between the two theoretic-linguistic frameworks she obtained and blend the Chinese knowledge in the Western English-speaking context. She respects the equality of these two intellectual frameworks in her mind, and maximises the effectiveness of connecting them. This type of critical dialogue, according to Cao and Shen (2013), is not only just being harmonious with divergence but also creative. As is stated by Lin, it brings discoveries of ‘things that are not so obvious to [her] before’ for her to think critically.

Such type of dialogue can also be detected in critically interacting with literature. One Chinese educator shared her experiences over this matter.

I read papers where they use Chinese concepts in Hanzi as their theoretical resources, and I find this really interesting. These concepts are not difficult or profound, but the way they relate to Western theatrical framework and the way they are implanted in Australian educational environment is something I hadn’t thought of (Chi-e-Tan).

This transcript indicates a more overt form of postmonolingual approach, that is research publications. The postmonolingual approach presented an innovative alternative to Tan to think critically about her place in English and Chinese theoretic-linguistic frameworks. The use of Hanzi in relation to Western theatrical framework presented by literature cleared a critical thinking path to a cross-language divergence that she ‘hadn’t thought of.’ A postmonolingually enacted dialogue shows that antinomy or contradiction between two apparently equally valid principles in respect of one individual or a single knowledge system is ‘empty’ (Jullien, 2014, p. 167) Divergence in thinking, or even a real contradiction, can mean that an alternative solution does not readily emerge.
A postmonolingual approach and dialogue are not restricted to individual critical practice alone: Li referred to a critical dialogue with her Western English-speaking Educator directed by a postmonolingual pedagogy.

My supervisor would ask me to explain each character of a Chinese term and ask me to give an English explanation of the possible combinations of these two separate characters. At first I felt a bit uncomfortable because I thought there was not much use in doing this... I was explaining something new to him that he was interested in, but what use was it to me? But when I actually dug deep into the possibilities of those characters and tried to explain them in English to him, being asked things that I had thought were self-explanatory, the combined words became more meaningful to me (Aus-Li).

Deliberately engaging a postmonolingual approach not only opens up Li’s theoretic-linguistic resources to her Western English-speaking educator, but also fed associative free reflection back to Li that was capable of either compliance or critique. The deliberate mix of resources from two monolingual paradigms dismantles the meaning that has been taken for granted. New potential for critical thinking was brewing in dialogue as the sense making process enhanced awareness and keenness for wider range of possibilities in a situation of postmonolingual learning and research for both students and educators. Another student points out - ‘We [students and educators] are advancing each other by sharing knowledge and culture’ (Aus-Jin). Jullien (2014) sees such dialogic confrontation as showing ‘only by emerging from our own culture that we take into account how much we do not know about the culture we so peremptorily consider to be our own’ (p.143).

Dialogue is crucial in shaping Chinese international students’ capabilities for critical thinking in cross-language and intercultural academic encounters, in a situation where particular instances of Chinese intellectual are missing or lost through remaining merely implicit, and continue to be ‘oppressed and subordinated in the silence of their existence’ (Alexander, et. al, 2014, p. 72). A postmonolingual approach works to ‘pull multilingualism free of the dominance of monolingualism’ through transfer based on double knowing of Chinese conceptual resources and English conceptual resources (Singh & Qi, 2013, p. 5). Bridging the conceived knowledge to the existence of divergence requires the generality of theoretic-linguistic framework to move upstream from themselves. One way to do this is to
revisit simple originality and examine the concepts we already knew in a postmonolingual condition. For instance, as with Li, explaining the individual characters of a Chinese term and situating the theme in various Chinese and Western contexts. A dialogue made possible by a postmonolingual approach does not provide an enclosed definition or use of any multilingual concepts, ideas and theories, but reconfigures them in a completely different way (Jullien, 2014). Frisk and Östersjö (2013) hold that the primary importance of dialogue lies in achieve an awareness of divergence, that is ‘the idea that all things could be different’ (p.55).

A postmonolingual approach also invites Chinese international students to think critically about a dialogue between two knowledge systems.

We are normally concerned about how to make the global become local, that is for us to apply the global English to our local practice in China. But after I did my research, I realised it is important to make our local global, that is to introduce Chinese concepts, language and stuff like that to the world… I still remember my supervisor telling me there was this stage play, talking about stories of Aboriginal people. The play deliberately used Aboriginal language in an English based script and never translated them, so audiences had to guess the meaning through context. They wouldn’t be able to know whether the meaning they guessed was right or wrong, it was just possibilities. At first the audience may find it annoying, but eventually they see the beauty of such language and its imaginative power in interpreting [culture]. I hope someday we could do similar things with Chinese in the field of education (Aus-Ye).

This student was noting the change in her critical perception of the exchange between the global and the local, more specifically between English theoretic-linguistic knowledge and the equivalent Chinese phenomenon. A stage play embodying a postmonolingual condition showed the limitations of the dominant English monolingual paradigm. The exchange between Chinese and Anglophone intellectual resources was a reciprocal flow: neither was taking over the other. Exposure to a postmonolingual condition imparted the value of divergence in critical capabilities of students from China as defined by their background knowledge. Emancipated from any dominant English knowledge institutions, she was enlightened with a critical awareness of how a postmonolingual approach can ‘make our local global.’ The stage play also showed Ye how an audience could be moved by a multilingual awareness of the beauty and imaginative power of another language. The diversity inherent in Ye’s postmonolingual perception ‘circulates
between various intelligibilities’ (Jullien, 2014, p.168). It promotes a mutual understanding and respect between different cultural and knowledge communities that will not be achieved by endorsing one or other critical knowledge framework alone, no matter whether it be a Western model or a Chinese one.

In terms of pedagogy, Singh (2010) suggests educators unveil critical intelligence to students themselves, by ‘having them use their homeland’s heritage of intellectual disputation as an educational asset’ (p. 41). In a similar vein, Elliot and Reynolds (2014) argue that universities need to place more emphasis on the value of divergence in order to unleash the critical intelligence of international students rather than ‘attempt to respond to the particularities of individual cultural groups’ (p. 309). Against a backdrop of Western-centric knowledge diffusion, a counterflow postmonolingual critical approach will contribute to the co-construction of knowledge. This section has shown how a critical cross-language approach has enabled students from China to achieve complex, interrelated verbal and conceptual perception.

### 7.4 Synthesised critical thinking

Up to this point this chapter has demonstrated how students from China thinking have been capable of expansion through their own critical awareness of educational and cultural divergence and an openness to double knowing and postmonolingual approaches. Now in line with a recommendation by both Wen and Han that students from China be encouraged to use a cross-language approach in order to expressly explicate their own critical thinking, this section introduces a mode of *synthesised critical thinking* mode that Chinese international students can employ in the course of their studies and research as an instrument to achieve explicit, verifiable critical thinking.

A *synthesised critical thinking* mode in cross-language and intercultural education aims at a critical perspective combining a home heritage knowledge background with a targeted knowledge framework in the construction of a co-knowledge product. Through development of a personal knowledge framework (Figure 7.1 below), this interactive mode aims to foster individual resourcefulness in a way unimagined by a
monolingual paradigm; accordingly, it is likely to result in different associated theories. Clifford and Montgomery (2014) hold that international education should not be seen as an ‘extension of the market place’ featuring a radical pursuit in critical thinking but rather as a divergent public place for synthesised ‘critical inquiry and meaningful dialogue’ (p. 41). Kim et al (2013) for their part expect educators to regard Chinese international students in a Western environment as equals in terms of critical intelligence who should be given ‘opportunity to pause and reflect on, analyse, and discuss’ concepts and thinking processes in a postmonolingual situation (p.226).

Before

![Diagram](image1)

Interaction

After

A- (1) Chinese international students
(2) Chinese theoretic-linguistic framework

C- (1) Western English speaking educator
7.4.1 兼容并济 Jiān róng bìng jì: ‘inclusive mutual reinforcement’

In a situation where students and educators respect divergence in a framework of critical intelligence and knowledge, they both advance in co-production of knowledge (Aus-Jin, section 7.3). A critical agenda can then be developed using the concept of 兼容并济 (jiān róng bìng jì), ‘inclusive mutual reinforcement.’ This four character phrase may be explained as follows: 兼 (jiān) means ‘both at the same time,’; while 容 (róng) means ‘accommodate, take in,’ so that 兼容 (jiān róng) is ‘inclusive.’ 并 (Bìng) is ‘together, side by side,’ while 济 (jì) means ‘assist’ or ‘achieve,’ so there is mutual reinforcement. The phrase may thus be translated as ‘inclusive mutual reinforcement.’ The phrase 兼容并济 (jiān róng bìng jì) is a Chinese conceptualisation representing postmonolingual synthesised critical thinking cross-language intercultural education.

In incorporating their Chinese intellectual resources into a dialogue in cross-language intercultural learning and research, students from China can alternate ‘between multiple sources of critical thinking,’ one linguistic or cultural sphere crossing into or overlapping with the other (Singh, 2013, p.147). Even more important is the consideration that the 兼容并济 (jiān róng bìng jì) concept posits a theoretical basis for Western English-speaking educators, as well as students from China themselves.

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4 兼容 (Jiān róng) is synonymous with 包容 (bāo róng), ‘inclusive,’ mentioned by Lin in Section 7.3 in connection with a ‘critical mindset.’ 包容 however may involve one component being dominant over another, and so 兼容 (Jiān róng) has been used instead. 兼容 tends to imply an equal relationship between students and educators as well as each knowledge system.
to apply the notion of multilingual critical intelligence to the thinking of these international students.

To contextualise 兼容并济 (jiān róng bìng jì) as a principle for inclusive and mutual reinforcement, this concept involves critical overview that makes educational sense through focusing on details of different actors, ideas and aspects of knowledge, as shown in Figure 7.1 above. The principle encourages students from China to actively access both language frameworks, using any available critical tools, to build a collective dialogue amongst themselves as well as communicating and sharing knowledge with their educators. As they do this, the 兼容并济 (jiān róng bìng jì) principle will utilise their existing intellectual resources and also help develop more sophisticated critical perspectives. For educators, 兼容并济 (jiān róng bìng jì) invites respect and appreciation of the cross-language theoretical resources brought by these students from China, and holds out the prospect of working side by side with them to achieve a postmonolingual divergence in cognitive knowledge and analytical thought. Table 7.4 shows how the 兼容并济 (jiān róng bìng jì) concept of ‘inclusive mutual reinforcement’ ties in with other theoretical concepts.

**Table 7.4: The 兼容并济 (jiān róng bìng jì) principle**

Associated theoretical concepts:

- Double knowing (Singh & Schresta, 2008)
- Dialogue (Jullien, 2014)
- Postmonolingual approach (Yildiz, 2012))
- Intellectual equality (Rancière, 1991)
- Divergence (Jullien, 2014)
Double knowing through cross-language analytical thinking enables a connection between two knowledge systems; the inclusive and reciprocal principle of 兼容并濟 accentuates this process. As it works within a cross-language paradigm, the principle stresses dialogue between students and educators; the individual paradigms of English and Chinese respectively; and the critical theoretic-linguistic framework that each tradition that each tradition represents. The implicit recognition of multilingual realities and the evidence from cases of cross-language thinking would provide theoretical support for a deliberate formation of a postmonolingual condition in an educational environment. 兼容并 济 is also a potential initial platform for intellectual equality, signalling each party’s equal entitlement to a standpoint within a field of critical learning and research. In this way any future educational practices would be established on such an equal platform with the aim of mutual student and educator growth. Vital to the principle is an acknowledgement of each individual member's particular education experience in shaping his or her unique capacity for critical thinking, and also a commitment to co-operation in developing that capacity. This principle thus resonates with Jullien’s divergence and the other theoretical concepts in Table 7.4.

 兼容并 濟 ‘inclusive mutual reinforcement,’ has a firm central place in critical thinking precisely because it allows various alternative ways of thinking to take place and in fact encourages different co-existing presences to interact in ways that may free an actor—a critical individual or a monolingual knowledge framework—from obstructive factors, in relating to another world which is 'characterised by its epistemological diversity and its dialogic possibility' (Cadman & Song, 2012, p. 5). The roles of equal actors from two different linguistic and cultural domains in co-production of theoretic-linguistic knowledge are central to the development of critical thinking.
7.5 Conclusion and limitations of this chapter

This chapter has explored Chinese international student capabilities for critical thinking in an Australian cross-language intercultural learning and research environment. The discussion has not touched on how students from China might use their knowledge of foreign languages to assist their study within China. Data in Section 7.1.1 on the use of multilingual capabilities to extend critical thinking may have some relatively limited indirect application to students in and from China, who may well have less intercultural learning and research experience than Chinese international students studying in Australia. Further specific research would be required to clarify this issue.
CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION: MULTIMODAL CRITICAL THINKING AND KNOWLEDGE CO-PRODUCTION

8.0 Introduction

This study has sought to demonstrate the validity of a premise that Chinese modes of critical thinking and capabilities of students from China for such critical thinking can be explained, tested and further extended so that students from China, particularly postgraduate students, can effectively engage in culturally divergent learning, research and teaching. Proceeding on the assumption that students from China possess the equal inherent potential capabilities for critical thinking, the primary focus of this thesis has been to unveil these modes of critical thinking through their existing theoretical and linguistic knowledge so that they can employ them in their learning and research in Australian universities, rather than simply be taught techniques of critical thinking as largely defined by Western Anglophone education.

The focus of the thesis has emerged through confrontation by two scholarly lines of argument. One is a deficit construction of Chinese students with regard to their capacity for critical thinking (Egege & Kutieleh, 2004; Asmar, 2005; Clark & Gieve, 2006; Tran, 2013). The other is a claim that non-Western or even non-Anglophone knowledge has an academically marginal status (Winchester-Seeto, et al. 2014; Singh, 2011a, 2011b, Meng, 2012, Qi, 2015, Singh & Lu, in press). From the point of view of intellectual equality (Rancière, 1991), this thesis argues that the potential of Chinese modes of critical thinking and capacity of students from China for critical thinking is still to be realised in multilingual intercultural education in Australia. Therefore, this study contributes to a conceptual shift beyond cultural and institutional dichotomies of English-only monolingualism in regards to thinking, analysis, academia and scholarship to post-monolingual education and research.
It is a fundamental proposition of this thesis that reading, integrating, conceptualising and communicating modes of critical thinking are a requirement of mature scholarship. Yet the thesis asserts that this ought to be a reality for students from China in their own language as well as in English. Thus, for Chinese postgraduate students in particular, this research has demonstrated how Chinese modes of critical thinking can be applied through developing and synthesising students’ existing knowledge. The large number of postgraduate students from studying in Australian universities (Bradley, 2008; Pyne, 2016) derive knowledge and experience through the institution (Boltanski, 2011) of Western/Anglophone knowledge embodied in a monolingual paradigm (Yildiz, 2012) and pedagogies of uniformization (Jullien, 2014). Nevertheless, there are areas where students from China can engage in and extend their Chinese modes of critical thinking while doing research in Australia (Singh & Shrestha, 2008, Singh & Han, 2010). Students from China need to critically pursue an ‘emancipation’ from an albeit unintended yet actual suppression of their opportunity for effective self-expression (Fay, 1975; Boltanski, 2011; Rancière, 2010). In uncovering the reality of their situation, this research has exposed a disconnect between the deceptive image of uncriticality against a deceptively dominant monolingual culture. The research has determined to investigate what should not be ignored and what should be redressed. The bulk of this thesis has been dedicated to analysing (a) the constraints that limit postgraduate students from China from performing Chinese modes of critical thinking; and (b) the alternatives that extend their capabilities for engaging Chinese modes of critical thinking in the Western and in particular Anglophone academic field. These two strands have been integrated to form a notion of critical thinking with which to address educational matters arising out of the research topic.

The innovation of this thesis lies in shifting debate away from a monolingually shaped mindset, towards more holistic pedagogies that are underpinned by an understanding of the intellectual equality of all students. This could then open up ways to support the emancipation of all students towards hybrid ways of critical thinking. Further, it could facilitate processes towards a reconceptualised university system that appreciates a ‘postmonolingual condition’ as a more comprehensive
representation of the fluid and globalised context in which today’s students work and study, and thus, provide a foundation for more authentic and inclusive pedagogies that are reflective of this.

A summary of the research follows, including most significant findings, implications, limitation and concerns, and finally recommendations for future study.

8.1 Most significant findings

This study has identified, categorised, and conceptualised Chinese modes of critical thinking, and in particular Chinese postgraduate students’ capacities for such thinking. The study has demonstrated that these Chinese critical actors can be aware of and critical of their own circumstances where their learning capacity is effectively suppressed. By studying the case that is the Chinese modes of critical thinking that had been brought by international students from China, this research focuses on the verification of intellectual equality, and extend the idea of intercultural pedagogies through exploring what multilingual students’ Chinese modes of critical thinking available to them through their languages and theories offer for innovations in this field of education. In doing so, this case study is situated in reference to the phenomena to the internationalisation of critical thinking in universities, and contributes to a conceptual shift beyond cultural and institutional dichotomies of English-only monolingualism in regards to thinking, analysis, academia and scholarship to post-monolingual education and research. Progressive findings specifically related to concepts are discussed to exploit their meanings and purposes in this study. Details of findings from the evidentiary chapters are described below.
Critical thinking

The thesis began with a working elaboration of the term critical thinking, which is central to this study. To go back to the concept, critical thinking helps critical actors to adopt new perceptions of a reality that has been unconsciously accepted without question. Forming new understandings through reflective critical thinking on what such critical actors actually do, and what they are capable of doing, is equivalent to taking up weapons to fight for emancipation. This thesis has employed the terms critical inquiry, critical comment and critique as interrelated concepts describing different aspects of critical thinking.

Critical inquiry begins with a rational curiosity and is followed by a process of gathering information and then interpreting that information. Thus this study has begun with a critical inquiry about Chinese modes of critical thinking, has collected relevant data and has produced analysis and insights, leading to new ideas and applications as well as further questions. Critical comment produced by participants, captured in evidentiary excerpts, demonstrates both reasonable doubt and recognition of merit, as well as both reflective understanding and disagreement in relation to particular educational issues. The multiple perspectives in critical comment create a momentary space of disputation, where critical actors turn over issues in their own minds and debate them with others. A critique has emerged in the form of a synthesis of well-reasoned critical commentary, inductively deriving an unexpected but very rewarding understanding of various key concepts in the study.

Shifting the labels: ‘Chinese student’ to ‘multilingual critical actors’

The thesis cited a sizeable literature to review the construction of ‘Chinese students’. This body of literature explained these students’ alleged inability to think critically. The label “Chinese students” operates in a particular sociolinguistic context, naming them as students from nation-state of China who cannot think critically, rather than students who speak more than one language, and are able to present their critical thinking in one or more of those languages. This label poses limitation of Western-Anglophone-modes-of-critical-thinking-only which focuses on “Chinese students” as
having inadequate English language proficiency (Durkin, 2008a; Alison & Lee, 2014), unfamiliarity with English norms in regards to critical thinking (Clark & Gieve, 2006; Tian & Lwo, 2011). More importantly, the ways in which their experiences of Chinese modes of critical thinking are ignored (Singh, 2017). In contrast, building on Singh’s (2017) research, the study initially suggested on shift the stereotype of ‘Chinese students’ to ‘multilingual students’ from China, underpinned by an understanding of the intellectual equality (Rancière, 1991) of all multilingual students. However, at the end of this study, driven by the evidence, this thesis intends to make a further shift, that is, moving beyond ‘multilingual students’ to ‘multilingual critical actors’.

As was reported in chapter 7, when students’ full linguistic repertoire was mobilised, they can employ their multilingual familiarity with academic language norms in Chinese language to learn, inform, develop related norms in English. When they receive encouragement from supervisors who created a postmonolingual condition (Yildiz, 2012) for them, they can introduce their Chinese modes of critical thinking to 1) help them understand Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking; 2) uncover new possibility of the Chinese modes of critical thinking through interweaving them in English academic context. Using this familiarity with disciplinary content written in one language in another language, they find ways to develop their capabilities for theorising the Chinese modes of critical thinking. During the process of critical theorising, these students, together with their postmonolingually encouraging educators, open up possibilities to theoretical unthought (Jullien, 2014), by making anew a familiar critical concept. If they record such theorising in their critical writing, say, their thesis, they contribute to the divergence (Jullien, 2014) of knowledge framework in Chinese and English. To this point, these students are not only ‘multilingual students’ from China who come to Anglophone universities to learn, but potential ‘multilingual critical actors’ who can demonstrate their capabilities for critical arguments, and contribute these experiences of critical thinking in Chinese and/or English in Anglophone universities.
Verification of intellectual equality

This thesis starts with the theoretical presupposition of the verification of intellectual equality, and suggests making shift from the deficit view of ‘Chinese students’ to a more pedagogically profitable frame of ‘multilingual critical actors’. During reviewing the literature and interviewing some of the participants, the study found there is a gap regarding to the conceptualisation of alternative, more innovative and reciprocal pedagogies that take into account international students’ full repertoire of linguistic, especially the resources their languages provide for critical thinking. Conventionally monolingual mind-set students and educators in Anglophone universities are expected to position themselves in an assimilative relationship with this stance. Within this mindset their multiple modes of critical thinking associated with multiple languages are dismissed as linguistic baggage. Any sensation, and mode of critical thinking in Chinese they have which might lead them to question this are rendered as interference in their education. In this sense, international students from China are sometimes positioned in an intellectually unequal status with regard to their capabilities for critical thinking. The gap imposed by intellectual inequality requires more than ever a necessity to provide an evidence-based argument around the verification of intellectual equality. In addressing the verification, the thesis progresses to move away from a monolingually shaped mindset regarding critical thinking, towards a more reciprocal methodology established on an acknowledgement of the intellectual equality of all multilingual students. Building on the focus of verification of intellectual equality, this thesis adds new rationales for post-monolingual pedagogical approaches.

In doing so it contributes to the scholarly debates about Asia literacy, neoliberal globalization policies and the possibilities international student mobility presents for knowledge co-production and dissemination. In this study, interested multilingual students are to invite to verify the presupposition that, intellectually they are equally capable of thinking critically using the multilayered linguistic repertoire as are monolingual students who only use English. Their Chinese modes of critical thinking are of same value as the Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking, as long as their full linguistic repertoire is formed and deployed through intersecting processes located on the border between monolingualism and multilingualism, and not simply
an individual possession. The point of this thesis is that international students from China, as multilingual critical actors, if they have the will and desire to do so, can take the chance to see what they can do, say and be by working with the presuppositions of intellectual equality. Thus, established on the effort this study invests for verification, it can move on to the next level for new knowledge paradigms and mindsets for internationalising education. However, it is worth reiterating, the verification of intellectual equality is not the goal of this study, nor any kind of emancipatory studies, but a consciously progressing procedure which pursues critical emancipation.

**Overall findings**

Figure 8.1 displays the developmental conceptual trajectory of research. The theoretical framework has been continuously refined and advanced throughout the study. Fed with the empirical findings, the framework forms a theoretical contribution to knowledge. The original contributions, coloured green, will be explained in detail in following sub-sections. The research starts with a presupposition of intellectual equality (Rancière, 1991) in that Chinese students are equally able to perform in critical thinking, rather than a deficit view that they have an intrinsic or culturally conditioned but severely handicapped ability to perform in critical thinking (Asmar, 2005; Egege and Kutieleh, 2004; Huang, 2013; Tran, 2013).
After demonstrating particular Chinese modes of critical thinking (Chapter Five), the study has asked two questions:

1) In an Australian educational context, why were these apparently critical international students from China perceived as uncritical and why did they perform unsatisfactorily in terms of critical thinking? (Chapter Six).

2) How were these students’ capabilities for critical thinking to be extended through engaging their existing knowledge? (Chapter Seven).

Figure 8.1 presents my analysis of the evidence as a conflict between a radical approach and a synthesized approach to critical thinking. This thesis has never entertained a situation where all international students from China can think critically and do think critically. Rather, the thesis has sought to verify the presumption of intellectual equality through analysing Chinese modes of critical thinking as employed by postgraduate students from China. Of course there may be multiple
ways to interpret individual issues, and alternative perspectives have been discussed in the evidentiary chapters, Chapters Five to Seven.

This study makes an original contribution to knowledge in three particular ways. First, it reported on particular modes of Chinese modes of critical thinking that is strangler fig mode of critical thinking. This metaphorical critical thinking highlights the appropriately strategic use of opportunities informed by an appraisal of different types of knowledge and differential levels of power in particular situations. Second, the study provides insights into access by international students from China, particularly postgraduate students, to two frameworks of language and theory, and in this way advances a claim of activating and extending their modes of critical thinking. Third, through promoting interaction among global sources of critical intelligence, the study enables knowledge co-production among divergent traditions.

The following sub-sections illustrate the findings in relation to each contributory question.

**What type of Chinese modes of critical thinking can be generated from Chinese contemporary popular culture, and how does such popular critical thinking operate?**

Emerging from the novel of *The Empresses In the Palace: Zhen Huan Zhan* (Liu Lianzi, 2007) is a mode of Chinese critical thinking metaphorically characterised as a *strangler fig mode of critical thinking*. This strategy is derived through a deductive rather than inductive reasoning process and so may have tentative status as an educational concept, but it is a concept that opens consideration of ways in Chinese modes of critical thinking have been captured by Chinese popular culture. These modes of critical thinking are used as resources by students from China in everyday critical thinking in their own language. However, their rich resources of meaning and cogitation embodied in the Chinese language are difficult to transfer into Western educational contexts.
The strangler fig mode of critical thinking is characterised by three stages: first, making use of a vulnerable point—a critical process of enlightenment; attaching itself to a source of power—thus an empowering process; and thirdly, taking over power—a process of emancipation (Fay, 1975). This mode of critical thinking is considered a critical emancipatory procedure to pose a strategic challenge to a high pressure institution (Boltanski, 2011). However, the strangler fig mode of critical thinking has been criticised for its crafty and perhaps less ethical nature (Bao, 2012).

This mode of critical thinking finds expression by Chinese critical actors, as shown in Chinese postgraduate students’ everyday language play. Critical actors engaging with a strangler fig mode of critical thinking in their presentation are protecting themselves from institutional pressure (Boltanski, 2011), while still managing to express critical comment regarding social injustice. However, the subtle use of such a mode of critical thinking is dependent on colloquial Chinese for expression, and thus may not be apparent to observers of Chinese international students’ study in Western universities.

Originally I hoped that the strangler fig mode of critical thinking would provide a resource for postgraduate students from China to use in their learning and research. However in an unexpected finding from the research results, participants considered that the strangler fig could be irrelevant to their studies, or even obstructive. Specifically, they were worried that its manipulative, perhaps unethical nature may damage Chinese international students’ image. Moreover, such subtle and strategic mode of critical thinking in practice constrained their implementation of existing Chinese critical knowledge. The next section touches further on the counterproductive influence of the strangler fig mode of critical thinking.

The ambivalence emerged around strangler fig mode of critical thinking is highlighted in chapter five in order to preserve the intellectual honesty. As the alternative evidence was amassed which indicated international postgraduate students from China exhibited diverse responses to this critical strategy, it is my responsibility to open to unexpected research findings to maintain a careful and cautious scholarly disposition, as well as an attentiveness to ethical ambiguity.
What constrains Chinese international postgraduate students’ critical thinking performance in Anglophone defined learning and research?

Rancière’s (1991) ‘inferiority’ of students in critical thinking capability is a position he takes in arguing for a view of intellectual inequality (p. 39). This resonates with Western educators’ findings that Chinese students often do not perform well in critical thinking in English Western-centric learning and research. The feeling of ‘inferiority’ has infected the thinking of many students from China to a certain extent, and unsatisfactory performance may have been equated to inferiority in intelligence. At the same time there has been an inevitable concern to participate in a profitable educational future. In this kind of situation where Western critical thinking is not only believed to be more advanced but able to convey material signs of success, some students see the need to make a choice between Chinese and Western modes of critical thought. In these circumstances some ignore the Chinese modes of critical thinking that are already available to them and engage in a radical pursuit of Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking.

Evidence has been adduced to suggest that Chinese critical actors were aware of the influences of institution (Boltanski, 2011) on Chinese modes of critical thinking: they can be cautious with the negative consequences of resisting the institution when proposing critical thinking. This kind of caution might be a lesson learnt from a traumatic national history (Berry, 2011). It is manifested in a kind of self-censorship that might lead to a compromise between expression of critical thinking on the one hand and instructional pressure on the other. In the view of this thesis, such a compromise would not justify a radical pursuit of Western critical thinking. Yet for students confronting the monolingual paradigm (Yildiz, 2012), compromise is an understandable catalytic factor.

Students from China are aware of the hierarchy in modes of critical thinking, and critical of this. This hierarchy was presented to them in their home country, and reinforced through their experience of study in Australia. Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking are shown as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984) which students from China need, but which was absent from their previous educational background. Universities suggest that Chinese critical learners need to
improve their English capability in order to meet the requirements of (Western) critical thinking; yet this pedagogical approach applies uniformization (Jullien, 2014) of a similar critical thinking landscape to all, while suppressing the manifest of divergent modes of critical thinking in different languages. Believing that Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking are more advanced, and accepting that they are necessary for learning, these students encounter a dilemma.

This deep-seated pedagogical dilemma exists as a struggle between engaging their existing modes of critical thinking in Chinese on the one hand and, on the other, acquiring Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking in English. Given that students’ heritage of modes of critical thinking was not seen in itself as a meaningful choice for them in this situation, especially when they were not capable enough to explain such thinking in English, sometimes the result has been a radical pursuit of Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking. The either/or choice, between Western or Chinese thinking, embodies a critical awareness of the situation but at the same time an awareness of their own vulnerability in it. The issue is the challenge of pursuing Western critical thinking in an Anglophone educational context, and at the same time engaging in heritage modes of critical thinking. In effect this would be a heavy burden. This radical approach to Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking is captured by a critical metaphor among students from China: 得到了天空，失去了大地 (Dèdiáo le tiānkōng, shīqù le dàdì, ‘Gain the sky but lose the earth’). The Anglophone universities have identified a pedagogical gap, but they simply advise students from China to study more English, and they have not gone further than that, students from China have come from a teacher-centred learning environment where what they had to learn was made clear. They have come to a discovery-oriented Western environment where students themselves have to identify and pursue their targets in learning. No interactive pedagogical process occurs, there are no mentors to facilitate the process, and students often embark on a radical course of learning that is bereft of that crucial enlightenment where fusion of opposites take place in the mind of each individual.

Meanwhile Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking operating in English are esteemed by some students for their material value. The literature shows that Asian
students seek education from English-speaking countries for a more profitable professional future (Kim, 2011), thinking that a degree from universities in these countries will ‘guarantee’ an employment offer (Yan & Berliner, 2011a, p. 175). This was evident in student interviews that characterised learning English and its associated modes of critical thinking as ‘gold-plating’. This commodification of Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking has created an illusion of image in an endeavour to equalise the market between ‘the seller and buyer of a commodity’ (Rancière, 2009, p. 38). Yet even as they see their pursuit of Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking for their potential material value as a conscious free choice, they have unknowingly sunk more deeply into the mire of dominant Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking as mediated through English.

Further to the Chinese strangler fig metaphor discussed in the previous section, such a process of attachment is found to be problematic. Now one way to obtain power is to be recognised as a member or ally of the dominant group through attaching to it. Within an institution promoting the monolingual paradigm, students from China might seek to change their vulnerable subordinate status by mimicking the preferred practices of the dominant group in using English and associated critical thinking strategies, hoping to become part of the mainstream and so share in its privileges. However, there is a catch: while acquiring personal power in one sense, in their radical pursuit they lose the opportunity to apply their existing heritage knowledge. As they in effect reinforce English critical dominance, their successors may find it even more difficult to engage non-mainstream Chinese modes of critical thinking.

In short, three factors combine to constraining international Chinese postgraduate students’ capacity to engage Chinese modes of critical thinking: the hierarchical ordering in various modes of critical thinking, the commercialised value of Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking, and some problematic features of Chinese modes of critical thinking. A presupposition of intellectual inequality (Ranciere, 1991) is one characterisation of a deficit perception of non-Western non-English-speaking students and their native language modes of critical thinking. This paradoxically promotes a radical pursuit in critical thinking through uniformization (Jullien, 2014), which favours Anglophone critical actors, reinforcing a position of superiority in terms of both language and modes of critical thinking. The result is to
limit demonstrations of capacity of students from China for critical thinking and at the same time submerge Chinese modes of critical thinking as visible entities. This goes back to the problem of uniformization of the English-only monolingual paradigm (Yildiz, 2012) and its associated modes of critical thinking. Such a drive for uniformity stymies the different modes of critical thinking that can be generated by divergent critical intellectual cultures.

What modes of critical thinking find expression in learning and research of students from China, and how can this engagement to be extended to a reciprocal approach to learning, research and teaching?

Basing itself on the assumption of intellectual equality (Rancière, 1991), this study has found that postgraduate students from China have shown themselves able to engage in critical thinking valued by Western universities, as well as Chinese modes of critical thinking. There is a very important educational morale to be drawn here: when students’ problems are approached in terms of where they are strong, rather than where they may be deficient, they may derive extended critical meanings from their framework of heritage knowledge. Therefore, this thesis calls for synthesized critical thinking as opposed to the radical pursuit of critical thinking.

There is evidence that an intercultural educational environment in some Australian universities has stimulated Chinese postgraduate students’ capacity for an equal and divergent critical thinking. As some students from China struggled to think critically in Western ways in English, others have celebrated a critical learning environment. These students’ critical comments reveal a disenchantment with the dominance of Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking and knowledge. On the principle of intellectual equality (Rancière, 1991), a critical emancipatory transformation within students from China critical thinking has been rendered possible through a pedagogic process revealing their existing capabilities to them. Encountering intercultural divergence (Jullien, 2014) as embodied in an Australian university educational context has helped them to think critically about new possibilities. A divergent intercultural encounter in education that welcomes the multiple modes of critical
thinking—divergent features of nation, culture and people—have been able to facilitate synthesised critical emancipation.

Chinese modes of critical thinking have helped students from China to engage more effectively with the Western intellectual edifice that they confront. They have used cross-language *double knowing* (Singh & Shrestha, 2008) to create a new critical thinking perspective. The results have been better understanding of Western concepts; expansion of the scope of meaning of new concepts; and awareness of unlimited possibilities for a two-way exchange of knowledge.

A main issue is that students from China have shown aptitude in performing critical thinking but this has not been observed or else not recognised. In cases where Anglophone educators have cast aside any support for a view of intellectual inequality and gone on to encourage divergent thinking processes, students from China have demonstrated a reciprocal interaction of Chinese modes of critical thinking in English learning and research. They have been able to use concepts from their own heritage knowledge to advance a broader and more critical perspective of knowledge. Deliberate adoption of a postmonolingual (Yildiz, 2012) approach has encouraged Anglophone educators to invite students from China to use their language and theories of the Other to give effect to their critical thinking. This pedagogical approach has shown students’ thinking resources to Anglophone educators and also generated students’ own associative free reflection. Both sides can reach out for what is not known, or not yet known, through freeing potential academic connections within their critical mind. Such dialogue (Jullien, 2014) between these two educational monolingual paradigms and their knowledge systems dismantles tacitly accepted meanings and deliberately re-assembles them in a novel synthesised critical structure. This synthesized critical outcome cannot be achieved by the use of either Western or Chinese modes of critical thinking. Both divergent modes are needed to achieve it.

In short, on the basis of intellectual equality, modes of critical thinking facilitated by intercultural divergence have found expression in Chinese postgraduate students’ learning and research. Their Chinese modes of critical thinking have been embodied by a double knowing approach, and are can be deepened by a postmonolingual
pedagogy. *Synthesised critical thinking* is called for to realise cross-language intercultural knowledge. Such critical thinking skills can be extended through critical interactions on an equal footing two parties in a series of four encounters: (1) between Chinese international students and intercultural study settings; (2) between the existing Chinese theoretical and linguistic framework and a renewed Anglophone counterpart framework; (3) between Chinese international students and their Western Anglophone educators; and (4) between the system of Chinese critical thinking knowledge system and the Western counterpart system.

### 8.2 Implications for practice

The above are the most significant findings in relation to the research questions. This section now returns to the research problem, and the media reports pointing out the serious problem encountered by Anglophone universities in terms of an alleged deficit by Chinese international students in critical thinking (Matthews, 2016; Zhu, 2015; Ringmar, 2013; Hu, 2013). There are abundant references in the literature to Chinese students’ lack of awareness of critical thinking as well as inadequate proficiency in English, where it is often asserted that these students need to be provided with a critical approach in their learning (Egege & Kutieleh, 2004; Goode, 2007; Tran, 2013; O’Sullivan & Guo, 2010). There is thus a standardised image of the Chinese student that may amount to a stereotyped characteristic, and this has even induced students from China to believe that they are not competitive in terms of a capacity for critical thinking (Zhu, 2015). Such problematic construction of Chinese students’ capabilities for critical thinking needed to be reconsidered and addressed by students and educators in new approaches.

Postgraduate research education in Anglophone universities almost entirely uses English-only pedagogies to convey Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking. Students, academics, and universities worldwide know how important knowledge of English as well as knowledge presented in English are in international education (Kirkpatrick & Cummins, 2011; Singh & Shrestha, 2008; Clifford & Montgomery, 2014). This knowledge is accepted as being integral to postgraduate research
education with regard to assessing Chinese international students’ capabilities for critical thinking (Shohamy, 2011; Ku, 2009; Tian & Low, 2010). Chinese students with an inadequate level of English and a lack of critical thinking skills as required by universities may face academic failure. This was illustrated through the failure of a high percentage of Chinese students enrolled in a critical thinking course at the University of Sydney. The standardised or otherwise uniform educational methodologies of education in Anglophone universities are informed by the monolingual paradigm; this paradigm marginalises Chinese international students’ modes of critical thinking that exist in terms of their cross-language intercultural capability.

The present study was significantly inspired by research in Asia literacy, arguing for the value of Asian language and knowledge in the Australian educational environment (Salter, 2014; Weinmann, 2015). That research symbolises and emphasises the value of Asian knowledge and by implication warrants investigation of the value of Chinese modes of critical thinking. The intellectual work of other scholars (Singh, 2009, 2011a; 2011 b; Meng, 2012, Qi, 2015), who have very extensively explored the question of engagement with non-Western English theoretical resources and critique, has lain down a significant stepping stone for the present research. Imbued with the possibilities of transforming intellectual diversity in Western Anglophone education, the present study has concerned itself with introducing Chinese modes of critical thinking as resources to be used by Chinese students and their English-speaking educators.

Conscious of the multiple perspectives debated in the research area, this study has wrestled with a deficit view of Chinese students with regard to their capacity for critical thinking. The research has been unable to provide a simple affirmation or denial of this deficit view; instead it calls for a different approach. It frames the question: How might the presupposition of intellectual equality with regards to postgraduate research students from China studying in Anglophone universities be verified through Chinese modes of critical thinking? The question has led to alternative innovative perspectives that emerge out of intellectual diversity (see table 8.1 below). Thus a response to the deficit view is to explore the implications of new creative approaches.
### Table 8.1: Key findings in relation to alternatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Radical pursuit in critical thinking</th>
<th>Synthesized critical thinking</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students yield to the dominance of Western mode of critical thinking</td>
<td>Students yield to the dominance of Western mode of critical thinking operated in English, choosing to overlook the existing critical thinking they can access in their mother tongue.</td>
<td>Students’ capabilities for critical thinking were extended through intercultural divergent encounter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students approached by pedagogy of uniformizing one single standard mode of critical thinking.</td>
<td>Students approached by pedagogy of uniformizing one single standard mode of critical thinking.</td>
<td>Students engaged with <em>double knowing</em> capabilities to access cross-language theoretical assets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students lose their strong basis of language and knowledge in attaching to the dominant commodification of Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking.</td>
<td>Students lose their strong basis of language and knowledge in attaching to the dominant commodification of Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking.</td>
<td>Students engaged with <em>double knowing</em> capabilities to access cross-language theoretical assets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students make an either/or choice: 得到了天空，失去了大地 (<em>Dédàole tiānkōng, shīqùle dàdì</em>, ‘Gain the sky but lose the earth’).</td>
<td>Students make an either/or choice: 得到了天空，失去了大地 (<em>Dédàole tiānkōng, shīqùle dàdì</em>, ‘Gain the sky but lose the earth’).</td>
<td>Students and educator <em>postmonolingual dialogue</em> can facilitate balanced reciprocal learning and teaching, as well as produce knowledge co-production.</td>
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**On the basis of intellectual equality**
### Alternatives

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Formulating 顶天立地 (Dǐng tiān lì dì) ¹ capabilities in multilingual intercultural education</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Cease the struggle between Western and Chinese modes of critical thinking, and try to extend one’s capabilities to achieve both, through accessing conceptual knowledge from multiple languages and intellectual cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Act as a bridge to connect the intellectual resources of Chinese and Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Be confident in one’s intellectual capabilities and bravely demonstrate the potential one’s diverse linguistic resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extending 兼容并济 (Jiān róng bìng jì) ² principles for knowledge co-production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Enable a more balanced teaching and learning environment to advance mutual growth for student and educator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Include multiple critical thinking resources, and allow divergent perspectives and practices to emerge. To do so, mobilise various alternative ways of critical thinking to interact in ways that may free students and educators from obstructive monolingual monocultural understanding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The alternatives above identify possible ramifications of working more proactively and strategically with international students from China before they leave China as well as during and after their sojourns in Australia and other Western countries. In particular, the implications can be applied to the following three fields.

### 8.2.1 Pre-departure studies for universities in China

These key findings and alternatives have considerable implications for Chinese international students studying in Anglophone universities, especially postgraduate students. Hence, they provide topics and materials for pre-departure seminar for students from China who are about to start their research journey overseas. To be informed with the findings of this study before their direct confrontation the dominant English and Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking can be expected to ease their anxiety during encountering the dilemma of choosing between the Western ‘天空

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¹ 顶天立地 Dǐng tiān lì dì: ‘To stand tall between heaven and earth’
² 兼容并济 Jiān róng bìng jì: ‘inclusive mutual reinforcement’
(tiānkōng, sky)’ the Chinese ‘大地 (dàdì, earth)’. More importantly, in revealing the outcomes of this research, a pre-departure seminar may offer Chinese international students alternative options to approach academic success in Anglophone universities.

This study finds that students from China need to continue to partake of their intellectual and linguistic heritage as they carry out critical thinking in learning and research. The mind can be alternately conscious of two divergent traditions; but to try to adopt a whole Western schema without regard for the existing substratum of heritage thinking signifies a lack of engagement that imperils thoroughgoing comprehension and logical expression. Acceptance of the duality between different traditions is the key to a meaningful pedagogy. This study has projected ways of realising cross-language intercultural capabilities through critical thinking. For postgraduate students, familiar Chinese terms can acquire status as conceptual tools, handles for novel insights. Engagement through using such communicative tools provides opportunities for Chinese postgraduate students to

a) demonstrate capacity to think critically, resisting a deficit view of Chinese students as uncritical;

b) provide innovative and culturally divergent ways of analysing an educational issues;

c) contribute to advanced knowledge co-production between English and Chinese knowledge frameworks through connecting divergent linguistic and theoretical resources;

d) come to a deeper and more explicit realisation of their own language, their cultural knowledge and their own identity.

These functions also have implications for students from China participating in the international academic field as largely defined by Anglophone knowledge and modes of critical thinking (Singh & Huang, 2013; Selvi, 2010), and can inform their communication of critical thinking through the medium of English, whether at international conferences or publications in international journals.
8.2.2 Internationalising Anglophone universities education

Further, this study has implications for teacher education for Anglophone educators and universities in the process of education of, and co-operation with, international postgraduate students from China. The argument is that to cast aside monolingual boundaries and intellectual inequality, and adopt a stance of intellectual equality and a postmonolingual approach, is to uncover sources of productive creativity in research education. It implies the independent application by such students of Chinese modes of critical thinking to learning and research. The project invites research educators and their universities to accept that Chinese modes of critical thinking, mediated by postgraduate students, are cultural constructs just as Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking are, and that neither should be privileged at the expense of the other. Additionally, it may be necessary to provide access to Chinese-language intellectual resources. This will entail reference to the historical critical culture of China that young undergraduates, and even postgraduates, may not be entirely familiar with; and it will not rule out reference to current Chinese intellectual publications. Through engaging Chinese modes of critical thinking in English, such students from China may advance many examples of hybrid knowledge and alternate paths of cognition.

Such a reciprocal postmonolingual pedagogical approach, on an equal basis between educator and student, will enable a versatile and diverse conceptual repertory to respond to the challenges of cross-language intercultural education. Where it is helpful for students to adopt thinking informed by their own heritage knowledge, educators should encourage this, and they may find that the original insights of their students can enrich the mainstream monolingual tradition. For their part, educators will provide sophisticated language and theories from the Anglophone knowledge framework. This is a theme for a dialogue based on exchange of student innovative critical thinking and educator professional knowledge that has potential for dynamic synergy.
8.2.3 Theories for international education

This research provides theoretical insight into various educational fields where particular groups experience educational difficulties. The more different two cultural educational environments are, the more stressful the adjustment is likely to be for international students (Yang & Clum, cited in Yan & Berliner, 2011b). Yan and Berliner (2011b) report in their study that coming from a ‘non-European, developing, Eastern country’, students from China may be expected to ‘encounter to a greater extent all the challenges and the difficulties people from any one of these three backgrounds ordinarily encounter’ (p. 523). In this sense, the implications that help students from China to address the educational challenges investigated in this research may inform other international students that face equally, or less challenging educational issues (Yan & Berliner, 2011b), for instance, the educational phenomenon of intellectual inequality which is imposed by monolingual paradigm, as discussed in this thesis.

Conceptual alternatives could build confidence and consolidate student capacities, for example 顶天立地 Dǐng tiān lì dì, ‘a firmly based spirit of adventure,’ and 兼容并济 Jiān róng bìng jì, ‘inclusive mutual reinforcement’ (implying postmonolingual synthesised critical thinking in cross-language intercultural education). The aim of international education is that students should acquire creative approaches that engage marginalised students and mobilise their existing modes of critical thinking might present educators with opportunities for educators to reconsider their meanings and potential.

8.3 A reflective comment

To look back over the research now embodied in this thesis, I value the research skills that I have developed in this study in terms of the expectations of Western Sydney University (2016).

1. Research skills: I have learnt to make an original contribution to the knowledge of the subject in my research area; I have developed informed arguments based
on evidence, concepts and reasoning and avoided expression of merely personal opinions.

2. Literature review: I have learnt to structure an informed and nuanced debate, through a comprehensive study appropriated in the discipline;

3. Research methodology: I have applied an appropriate research strategy for the case study together with methods suitable to the subject matter;

4. Data analysis: I have set out research findings and discussed these critically;

5. Communication skills: I have learnt to communicate more effectively through reading, listening, speaking and writing in academic English and through professional presentation;

6. Ethics: I have worked as an ethical and professional researcher, and responsibly discussed issues of critical thinking, intellectual equality and pedagogical effectiveness, giving weight to opinions from Chinese international students as well as Anglophone educators.

Most significantly, I bring away from this research an awareness of the need to engage with Western culture as well as deepening engagement with my own divergent culture. As the chief researcher for this study, I am a Chinese international student. In identifying myself in this way I am giving preference to my home country critical theoretic-linguistic knowledge. Personally, this has been a journey of emancipation as I became familiar with the literature on critical thinking as it concerns Chinese international postgraduate students and, discovering a suppressed reality within myself, I felt myself empowered to verify intellectual equality in my own university studies. Yet (as noted in Chapter Four and by Fay, 1987), this study does not claim to be a voice for emancipation of students from China through assertion of intellectual equality. The validity of the argument put forward by this thesis, and its value to Chinese international students and their Anglophone educators alike, are implied by the very presence of this study as an original contribution in the field of international education in an Anglophone-dominant environment. This study per se stands as an example of how an international student from another non-English speaking ethnic group with a divergent theoretical background has committed her existing knowledge, including knowledge of
her mother tongue, and her heritage critical thinking to engage learning and research to produce a body of original contributions.

8.4 Limitation and concerns

This case study used multiple source data sets, including a Chinese popular novel and twenty-one interviews with Chinese postgraduate students and their research educators in China and Australia. First, the analysis of the novel focused on the research problem and questions of this study and did not go more deeply into its potentially rich sources of critical thinking. Secondly, the response by potential interviewees was less than expected, and this limited the scope and detail of the interviews. Thirdly, the study placed strong reliance on interview data and this may have resulted in an element of subjective assertion by interviewees, whereas the reference to interviewees’ actual theses could have provided more objective insights into their criticality. Fourthly, this has been conducted as a qualitative study, whereas a mixed method study including quantitative data from questionnaires and surveys might have yielded further insights. Finally, although interview data was collected from participants from China as well as Australia, the research outcomes mostly suggested implications and alternatives for students from China in Anglophone educational contexts. Perspectives and strategies to extend the capacity of students in China to engage in heritage modes of critical thinking would need more sophisticated investigation (Note: research limitations compiled with reference to Yin, 2014).

The overall problem of acquiring skills in critical thinking by students from China covers a large potential research area (Section 1.4). However, this study has concentrated mainly on the issue of verifying intellectual equality through Chinese modes of critical thinking carried out through cross-language intercultural reasoning by Chinese international postgraduate students.
As the concerns and results of this study have been communicated to Chinese scholars³, the question has arisen of the timing at which students from China should begin to engage Chinese modes of critical thinking. Some Chinese scholars considered this a distraction from the priority task of learning new ways of critical thinking in English. A scholar at Zhongnan University has argued that the right time for students to engage in Chinese modes of critical thinking occurs after they have mastered English and Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking. This is an argument for a seriatim process of first English and Western thinking, and only afterwards integrating Chinese thinking - if students spent time polishing their existing Chinese skills in critical thinking, could they not simply extend these skills in China and save a large financial investment? Yet demonstrating capabilities for Chinese modes of critical thinking after learning Western modes would defer Chinese international students’ presentation of their existing intellectual capabilities. Plus, whether there is point to determine a student has ‘mastered’ a language, not to mention a second language? A starting point for this study has been an observed phenomenon of intellectual inequality in relation to postgraduate students from China in Anglophone universities when methods of critical thinking are being transmitted to them. The deficit media construction of Chinese students as uncritical, and at the same time the uncertain process of teaching Western methods of critical thinking through English as a second language, combine to justify an argument that simultaneous interaction between divergent critical traditions is likely to have pedagogical value for postgraduate students.

Nevertheless, to consider the problem from the point of view of postgraduate students from China, engaging Chinese modes of critical thinking could mean significant time and effort. Multiple sources, different perspectives and various alternatives could arise. For their Western educators, understanding student explanations of Chinese terms and implications could also be troublesome. This study has explored the potential advantages of cross-language intercultural dialogue, but there would be certain costs. Thus there could be a question of whether the study is working in the best interests of postgraduate students from China and their educators.

³ In a workshop conducted by School of education, Western Sydney university, with scholars from Zhongnan university as guest speakers.
An equally serious question also emerges in relation to my position in this study. Chapter Six has found that some students from China have been deceived, if not colonised, by an image of illusion. They have been struggling against inequality through acquiring a commodified package of English and Western thinking modes of critical thinking. Yet such an analysis begs the question of how, without knowing the whole picture of their educational experiences and goals, I can determine that they were not making the best choice according to their interests? Who am I to decide whether they have been deluded? In Chapter Six I pointed out that their approach to equality is a matter of convenience. And yet another way to understand Chinese students’ radical pursuit of Western Anglophone modes of critical thinking is to accept that these critical actors have made their own choice according to their own critical judgement—assuming that these ordinary critical actors share the same capacity for critical thinking as observers from a social elite (Boltanski, 2011). This gives rise to the question of whether my criticism of uniformed students deceived by the illusion of intellectual equality is an elite view.

All these limitations and concerns taken together have established a basis for future research, presented in the next section.

8.5 Recommendations for further research

The analysis and conceptualization presented in this study regarding to the research problem has faced opportunities and challenges. Evidence which has been excluded due to the consideration of length of the thesis will be included in a version to be published, as far as possible taking into account the limitations and concerns discussed in the previous section.

8.5.1 Literacy, education, and social-cultural studies

*Possible use of the strangler fig mode of critical thinking in learning and research*
The mode of critical thinking generated was not explored in specific detail in Chinese language. In investigating *Empresses in the Palace: Zhen Huan Zhuan* (Liu Lianzi, 2007), the focus was on making educational sense. The unique language used in the novel was overlooked, despite its embodiment of and connection to the stranger fig mode of critical thinking. Further research could see identify the actual engagement of such thinking in the novel writing and its effects, from a literary perspective.

In the field of education, the stranger fig mode of critical thinking was earlier found able to inform students’ learning in some ways, yet there were contrary indications as well. A wider pool of participants could investigate whether this mode of critical thinking has educational merits. If future research had decided that it does not, it will be important to find why students would exclude it as a critical strategy.

It was noted in Chapter Five that the novel provided basis for published works to generate insights to relate to critical actors’ daily life (Jin & Gao, 2012; Luo, 2013). Likewise, employing and analysing stranger fig mode of critical thinking in broader real-life context may inform social studies. The application of such critical thinking in this study is just a starting point in introducing this particular Chinese mode of criticality, to both Chinese and non-Chinese audiences. Much more detailed social-cultural empirical investigation in regard to its definition and practice will be useful.

**8.5.2 Educational theorising and social-cultural studies**

*(In)equality and illusion*

Studies on inequality in educating critical thinking focused on providing opportunities to help students emancipate themselves from the suppression and achieve equality (Rancière, 1991; Singh & Meng, 2012; O’Sullivan & Guo, 2010; Shohamy, 2011; Ku, 2009; Qi, 2015). However critical actors may approach equality very differently—some have even been seen here as deceived by a commodified simulacrum. This conflict provides basis for future research on educational theory concerning (in)equality and illusion. Students’ opinions on the commodification of English and its associated
modes of critical thinking may provide insights into the educational goal of intellectual equality.

As noted in Chapter Two there is a cultural deficit view relates Chinese students’ underachievement in critical thinking to their membership in the Chinese cultural group rather than the individual’s environment. The present study opposes to the argument of ‘deficit’ from an educational point of view, yet the validity of such ‘cultural’ deficit model requires more inquiries from a social-cultural angle. Although this study assumes that students from China have equal intelligence with students from Western countries, but in specific educational situations—for whatever cultural or other reasons—their performance suggests otherwise. Situations in which Chinese students have not performed satisfactorily in critical thinking need to be given research attention.

8.5.3 Pedagogy and comparative education

**Capacities of students from China for synthesized critical thinking and pedagogy development**

A considerable amount of writing has focused on intellectual engagement with students from a non-Western academic knowledge framework (Singh, 2011a; 2011b; Singh & Han, 2010; Meng, 2012; Qi, 2015). This study has examined the engagement of Chinese modes of critical thinking and its positive influences for students in Anglophone education. Future research in discipline of educational pedagogy could extend this engagement and focus on students’ demonstration of dual or multiple modes of thinking, or synthesized critical thinking in their studies in China and Australia. Theories and pedagogies addressing such synthesised critical thinking can provide valuable contributions to the theoretical study of the issue of divergence (Jullien, 2014) in international education.

The thesis has advocated extensive analysis to Chinese international postgraduate students’ experiences in the Western educational system. To these students from an intellectual tradition employing different methods of critical analysis in an educational system widely acknowledged as didactically teacher-centric, studying in a Western
Anglophone university means confrontation with a pedagogy that presents the widespread practice of student-centred learning and teaching, dependent on the ‘discovery method’ and constructive educational methods. Recording such confrontation provides important platform for future research in discipline of comparative education, in terms of examining Chinese education by using their insights drawn from authentic practices and situations in Western Anglophone universities.
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APPENDIX 1: ETHICS APPROVAL

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

4 November 2014

Professor Michael Singh
Centre for Educational Research

Dear Michael,

I wish to formally advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved your research proposal H10849 "Localising/Internationalising Australian and Chinese university education: Extending and deepening Chinese students’ capabilities for critique and knowledge co-production in Australia and China", until 31 August 2016 with the provision of a progress report annually if over 12 months and a final report on completion.

Conditions of Approval

1. A progress report will be due annually on the anniversary of the approval date.
2. A final report will be due at the expiration of the approval period.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee prior to being implemented. Amendments must be requested using the HREC Amendment Request Form: http://www.uwe.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/491130/HREC_Amendment_Request_Form.pdf.
4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events on participants must be reported to the Human Ethics Committee via the Human Ethics Officer as a matter of priority.
5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the Committee as a matter of priority.
6. Consent forms are to be retained within the archives of the School or Research Institute and made available to the Committee upon request.

Please quote the registration number and title as indicated above in the subject line on all future correspondence related to this project. All correspondence should be sent to the email address humanethics@uwe.edu.au.

This protocol covers the following researchers:
Michael Singh, Jinghe Han, Siyi Lu

Yours sincerely,

Professor Elizabeth Deane
Presiding Member,
Human Researcher Ethics Committee

1 The title of the thesis has been modified through the process of research, however the research focus and topic remains to be the same. Same situation applied to invitation email, participation sheet and participant consent form.
APPENDIX 2: INVITATION EMAIL

Dear Sir/Madam

I hope this email find you well.

My name is Siyi Lu. I am a PhD student at the University of Western Sydney. I hereby cordially invite you to participate in an interview for my research project.

I am currently working on a PhD research project entitled ‘Localising/internationalising Australian and Chinese university education: Extending and deepening Chinese students’ capabilities for critique and knowledge co-production in Australia and China’.

In this research project, I am working with the presupposition that Chinese students are equally intelligent as Australian students in critique. I am investigating which aspects of Chinese modes of critique can be used to contribute to a more balanced reciprocal approach to localising/internationalising education in Australia through Australian-Chinese knowledge co-production. The major research question to be answered in this study is: How can Chinese modes of critique be operationalised and employed in Australian educational research? In order to address this research question, I am conducting interviews with Chinese postgraduate research students and their supervisors from universities in Australia and China.

Your participation in this project may help you to identify different modes of critique use in Chinese language and the ways they may be used in research. There may be some
advantages for you of engaging Chinese modes of critique in your research and research education. You may even decide to engage different modes of critique more actively, to expand your strategies and resources used in knowledge production.

Your participation in this research is totally voluntary. You may withdraw from the interview and/or this project at any stage without any penalty. If you choose to withdraw, your data will be withdrawn at that stage.

The interview transcripts will be returned to you to check before being used in this research. If you wish to receive a copy of the final research outcome of this project, I will be happy to provide that upon request.

If you would like to know more about any aspect of the project, please feel free to contact me at Tel: +61 2 416 517 017 or via email: S.lu@uws.edu.au.

Your response will be highly appreciated as I am looking forward to work with you on this important study.

Kind regards

Siyi Lu
Project Title: Localising/internationalising Australian and Chinese university education: Extending and deepening Chinese students’ capabilities for critique and knowledge co-production in Australia and China

Project Summary:

The aim of this proposed research project is to investigate the possibility of creating a theoretic-pedagogical framework for establishing a balanced reciprocal mode of localising/internationalising education (Singh, 2009; 2010). This research proposal adopts the presupposition, that students from China (PRC) are equally intelligent as Australian students when it comes to critique. It will investigate this presupposition and if verified what it might contribute developing pedagogies of intellectual equality (Singh & Chen, 2012).

The major research question to be answered in this study is: How can Chinese modes of critique be operationalised and employed in Australian educational research?

First, the key concept of Chinese modes of critique will be investigated through an analysis of Chinese popular culture, specifically, a book ‘Empresses In the Palace’
(Zhen Huan Zhuan), as well as the television series (with the same title) developed from it.

Second, interviews will be conducted with postgraduate students major in human science, especially education, who are studying in China and their research educators. These interviews focus on both students’ and educators perspectives on uses of Chinese modes of critique in their practices of research and research education.

Third, interviews will be conducted with international Chinese students major in education, who are studying in Australia and their research educators. The interviews at this stage focus on:

a) students’ uses of their prior knowledge to construct and/or reconstruct Chinese modes of critique, through their interactions with peers and/or supervisors in a Western-based teaching and learning environment.

b) Australian research educators’ perspectives on (i) using Chinese modes of critique; (ii) the benefits of Australian-Chinese knowledge co-production; and (iii) the creation of Chinese/Australian theoretical-linguistic connections through educational research and research education.

You are invited to participate in this study conducted by Miss Siyi Lu, a PhD candidate in Centre for Educational Research, under the Supervision of Professor Michael Singh and Dr. Jing Han in the School of Education, University of Western Sydney.

**How is this study being paid for?**

The study is being sponsored by UWS Candidature Project Funds.
What will I be asked to do?

You will be invited to participate in two individual interviews. Each of these interviews will be conducted by the researcher (myself) in a conversational format. You will be asking questions encompassing your personal knowledge and experiences in research and research education, such as your prior knowledge of Chinese modes of critique, your uses of Chinese modes of critique in your research and research education, and your perspectives on the creation of Chinese/Western-Anglophone theoretical-linguistic connections. And you may be invited to explain and/or deepen your responses to the first round of interview, during a second round of interview.

How much of my time will I need to give?

30 to 40 minutes for each interview.

What specific benefits will I receive for participating?

Through participating in the interview for this research, you may be better able to debate the advantage of engaging Chinese modes of critique in your educational research and research education. You may benefit from being able to activate and mobilise different modes of critique, and expand your learning/teaching strategies and the resources to be used for knowledge production.
Will the study involve any discomfort for me? If so, what will you do to rectify it.

This study involves no harm or discomfort for you.

It will not force any intervention upon you. The researcher can assure you that all the information collected for this research will be kept in anonymous. The raw data will not be provided to your supervisors. Your interview transcript will be returned to you to check before used in research.

If you do feel uncomfortable in the participation, you may withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

How do you intend on publishing the results.

The results of this research will be disseminated via PhD thesis, conference papers, journal articles and other publications, including a jointly authored book with my principle supervisors.

Can I withdraw from the study?

Participation is entirely voluntary, and you are not obliged to be involved. If you do participate, you can withdraw at any time without giving any reason. If you do choose to withdraw, any information that you have supplied will be kept anonymous.
Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you can tell other people about the study by providing them with the chief investigator's contact details. They can contact the chief investigator to discuss their participation in the research project and obtain an information sheet.

What if I require further information?

Please contact Miss Siyi Lu should you wish to discuss the research further before deciding whether or not to participate.

Siyi Lu

PhD Candidate

School of Education

University of Western Sydney

Telephone: +61 2 4736 0760

Email: S.lu@uws.edu.au

What if I have a complaint?

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is: H10849.
If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au.

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.
参与者信息表

研究课题：澳大利亚及中国高等教育的本土化与国际化：延展与加深中国学生的批判性能力以及中澳共同知识产出。

项目概况

在本研究课题中，研究者的预设为中国学生与澳洲学生在批判性能力上拥有同样的智能。本研究旨在研究如何使用中国模式的批判性促进中澳知识共同产出，并以此来营造一种更为平衡双向的教育本土化和教育国际化方式。本研究的中心问题是：如何在澳洲教育研究中采用和实施中国模式的批判性思维？为此，本研究将采访在中国和澳大利亚的几所高校就读的研究生及其导师。

首先，本研究将通过分析中国流行文化元素（小说甄嬛传以及甄嬛传电视剧）来辨别中国式批判性思维一些主要特征概念。

其次，本研究将采访中国高校在读的研究生及其导师。采访旨在收集研究生及其导师对于在他们论文研究及教学实践中运用中国式批判的看法及实际应用。

再次，本研究将采访澳大利亚高校在读的中国国际研究生及其导师。采访旨在收集研究生及其导师对于

(a) 中国国际学生在欧美教育环境下对于对于中国式批判的构建运用以及二次构建。

(b) 澳大利亚导师对于：（i）中国式批判思维；（ii）中澳共同知识产出；（iii）中澳语言及科研理论共融；的看法。

您获邀参与本研究项目。该研究项目由陆思逸（西悉尼大学教育学院博士生，指导教师 Michael Singh 教授和韩京和博士）设计实施。
研究经费

本研究由西悉尼大学研究生研究经费资助。

您需要做

您将受邀参与两个采访。采访由研究员发起并以交谈的方式进行。采访内容包括您的教育经历以及与研究问题相关的问题，比如您对中国式批判的理解，您在您个人研究中对于中国式批判的运用，以及中澳语言及科研理论共融看法。如研究员认为第一次采访中的回复需要进一步加深诠释，您将受邀参加第二次采访。

采访时间

单次采访需要 30 到 40 分钟。

参加本研究的益处

通过参与本研究课题，您将有机会辨别中国批判性思维的不同模式以及它们适用于研究的途径，并有可能因此发现它们对您自身的研究及研究教育的帮助，甚至有可能因此更加积极频繁的在您的研究使用中国批判性思维模式，以促进研究方式的更新和知识资源的产出。

本研究是否对您有不利影响

参与本研究不会对您产生任何不利影响或危害，也不会对您的学习研究造成任何介入或调整。

研究员在此保证：本研究所收集的任何信息都会做匿名处理，原始资料和信息不会提交给您的导师。采访的转录文本将会发送给您，以便您确认内容是否属实。
如果您对参与本研究感到焦虑，您可以随时无理由退出。

论文的出版

本研究的结果将在研究员的博士论文发表，可能会在学术会议或期刊上发表。

可否退出研究

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能否与他人讨论本研究

可以。如果您的同事/同学/朋友对本研究感兴趣，您可以与其讨论，并为其提供研究员的联系信息。他们可以与研究员联系是否参与本研究。

获取更多信息

如果您想要了解本研究项目的更多信息，请您与陆思逸联系。

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投诉

本研究项目经西悉尼大学人文研究道德委员会审核批准。

批号为：_______H10849_______。

如果您对该课题的道德行为有任何抱怨或保留意见，可通过研究服务办公室联系道德委员会。联系方式如下：

电话：+61 2 47360229；传真：+61 2 47360013；电邮：humanethics@uws.edu.au

您提出的任何问题都将被保密，经全面调查后将结果反馈给您。

您如果同意参与本研究，请签署《参与者同意书》。
APPENDIX 4: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

English Version

This is a project specific consent form. It restricts the use of the data collected to the named project by the named investigators.

Project Title: Localising/Internationalising Australian and Chinese university education: Extending and deepening Chinese students’ capabilities for critique and knowledge co-production in Australia and China

I, ................................., consent to participate in the research project titled: Localising/Internationalising Australian and Chinese university education: Extending and deepening Chinese students’ capabilities for critique and knowledge co-production in Australia.

I acknowledge that:

I have read the participant information sheet and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that my involvement is confidential and that the information gained during the study may be published but no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher/s now or in the future.
☐ I consent to the interviews through audio/video tape recording.

Signed

Name

Date

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is: H10849.

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Chinese version

参与者同意书

该同意书仅限于指定调查人为指定课题数据搜集之用途。

项目标题：澳大利亚及中国高等教育的本土化与国际化：延展与加深中国学生的批判性能力以及中澳共同 知识产出。

本人，________________，同意参与标题为“澳大利亚及中国高等教育的本土化与国际化：延展与加深 中国学生的批判性能力以及中澳共同知识产出”的研究课题。

本人清楚地知道：

1. 本人已阅读过《参与者信息表》，并有机会参与讨论课题信息。

2. 课题研究程序及所需时间已由研究人员解释，本人对该课题的问题已得到满意的回答。

3. 本人同意参加采访。

4. 本人对该研究课题的参与是保密的。本人清楚研究期间收集的信息可能出版，但与本人的有关信息将不会以任何途径被识别。
5. 本人有权在任何阶段无理由退出该研究项目，且不会影响本人与研究人员的关系。

□ 本人同意录音记录采访过程。

姓名 __________________
签名 __________________
日期 ________________

该研究课题已由西悉尼大学人文研究
道德委员会审核批准。批号为：__。

如果您对该课题的道德行为有任何抱怨或保留意见，可通过研究服务办公室联系道德委员会。联系方式如下：

电话：+61 2 47360229；传真：+61 2 47360013；电邮：humanethics@uws.edu.au

您提出的问题都将被保密，经全面调查后将结果反馈给您。
APPENDIX 5: Seme-structured interview schedule

Students

Warming up (subconscious use of critical thinking)

1. Educational background, challenges in your recent task in your study/life.
   Probe: Why did you decide to do a research, and how do you proceed to what you have become today?
2. How did you decide your research directions?
   Probe: What is your original direction and what is your research focus now. If you have changed, why and how.
3. How often do you meet up with your supervisors?
   Probe: In what way do you discuss your progress? In what way do you expect your supervisor to discuss this with you?

The impression of critical thinking

4. To your knowledge, can you please describe critical thinking in your word?
5. Can you describe the daily critical thinking that is engaged by ordinary Chinese critical actors (students)?
   Probe: Can you provide a metaphor, image, phrase, phenomenon for the (Chinese modes of) critical thinking that is in your mind? It can be things you read online, from TV/books, from your study, in your daily life, in our slang, and so on.
6. What is your opinion of the strangler fig mode of critical thinking?
   Have you watched/read Zhenhuan Zhuan:
   Probe: if yes, can you please describe the critical strategies she engaged in the story? Can you provide a concept, metaphor, phrase to describe such modes of critical thinking you just describes?
If no, describe the strangler fig modes of critical thinking to the interviewee, and ask for their critical thoughts regarding what they were just provided.

7. Do you think critical thinking vary from different cultural context?
   Probe: If yes, why? Can you describe the difference between these different modes of critical thinking?

8. Have you studied in a Western-based educational environment?
   Probe: If yes, how does your awareness of previous knowledge of Chinese modes of critical thinking interact with your individual and national ‘self’/identity in a western learning and/or teaching environment?

The use of critical thinking

9. Do you have experiences of using strategic (critical and/or creative) ways in constructing a critical argument with your peers and/or supervisor? If yes, please describe.
   Probe: For example strangler fig mode?

10. Do you use any kind of (Chinese modes of) critical thinking in your thesis writing, and/or in your research practices?
    Probe: If yes, do you think it is effective, can you give an example? If no, why? If the interviewees cannot think of an example, use the example of strangler fig mode?

11. When you do engage (Chinese modes of) critical thinking in your thesis writing, and/or in your research practices, how do your peers/research educators react?
    Probe: When they show unfamiliarity lack of interest towards these kinds of critical thinking, what do you do? Do you explain/justify what you are doing? If yes, how.

12. Does the engagement of these modes of (Chinese modes of) critical thinking facilitate/hinder your process of learning and/or teaching practices?
    Probe: Does this the capabilities for critical thinking been extended/deepened, or set backwards through engagement?
13. Do you have experiences of strategically use linguistic to present your ideas? If yes, can you describe it?

Other (if the interviewee touched on these topics)

14. Are there other distinctive modes of critical thinking you derived from other cultural and linguistic context you have been engaged in your study? Under what circumstances do you engage that?

15. Are there any modes of critical thinking you generate/construct by yourself? Under what circumstances did you generate that?

16. Do you think gender issues effect on your mobilising your critical thinking, why or why not, and how?
Educators

Warming up (subconscious use of critical thinking)

1. Supervision background, challenges in your recent task in your study/life.
2. Do you have Chinese (international) research students? What is your opinion about their difference from Euro-American students?
3. How do you let your students choose their research directions?  
   Probe: If they change their original direction, what will you do to help them?  
   In what way do you think they expect you to supervise them?

The impression of critical thinking

4. To your knowledge, can you please describe critical thinking in your word?
5. Can you describe some modes of daily critical thinking that is engaged by ordinary Chinese critical actors (students)?  
   Probe: Can you provide a metaphor, image, phrase, phenomenon for the (Chinese modes of) critical thinking that is in your mind? It can be things you read online, from TV/books, from your experience with students, in your own home culture, in your daily life, in slang, and so on)
6. What is your opinion of the strangler fig mode of critical thinking?  
   Have you watched/read Zhenhuan Zhuan:  
   Probe: if yes, can you please describe the critical strategies she engaged in the story? Can you provide a concept, metaphor, phrase to describe such modes of critical thinking you just describes? 
   If no, describe the strangler fig modes of critical thinking to the interviewee, and ask for their critical thoughts regarding what they were just provided.
7. Do you think critical thinking vary from different cultural context?  
   Probe: If yes, why? Can you describe the difference between these different modes of critical thinking?
8. Do you think international students from China are mobilising their (Chinese) modes of critical thinking in their studies? And how?

   Probe: from your perspective, what are the distinguish differences from Chinese students and Euro-American (Australian) students mobilising critical thinking?

9. Do you think awareness of previous knowledge of (Chinese) modes of critical thinking interact with students’ individual and/or national ‘self’/identity in their study? If yes, how?

The use of critical thinking

10. Do you have experiences of using strategic (critical and/or creative) ways in constructing a critical argument with your students? If yes, please describe.

11. Do you use any kind of (Chinese modes of) critical thinking in your supervision with Chinese students, and/or in your research practices?

   Probe: If yes, do you think it is effective, can you give an example?

   If no, why? If they do not have an example, provide strangler fig mode and see their critical opinion of whether or not to use it.

12. When you do engage (Chinese modes of) critical thinking in your academic writing, and/or in your research practices, how do your peers/students react?

   Probe: When they show unfamiliarity lack of interest towards these kinds of critical thinking, what do you do? Do you explain/justify what you are doing? If yes, how.

13. Does the engagement of (Chinese modes of) modes of critical thinking facilitate/hinder your process of researching and supervision, and how?

14. Are you willing to deepen/extend these Chinese students’ capabilities for mobilising their Chinese modes of critical thinking in their learning and/or teaching process, presuming they possess their own modes of critical thinking?
Probe: If yes, how can you efficiently use the non-western Anglophone modes of critical thinking to benefit their study and co-knowledge producing? If no, why?

15. Do you have experiences of strategically use linguistic to present your ideas? If yes, can you describe it?

Other (if the interviewee touched on these topics)

16. Are there other distinctive modes of critical thinking you derived from other cultural and linguistic context you have been engaged in your study? Under what circumstances do you engage that?

17. Are there any modes of critical thinking you generate/construct by yourself? Under what circumstances did you generate that?

18. Do you think gender issues effect on your mobilising your critical thinking, why or why not, and how?