Coming Ready or Not: Chinese Students in Australia, Their Motivations, Language Proficiency and Impact on Australia's Tertiary Environment

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COMING READY OR NOT

CHINESE STUDENTS IN AUSTRALIA

THEIR MOTIVATIONS, LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND

IMPACT ON AUSTRALIA'S TERTIARY ENVIRONMENT

APPENDICES

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APPENDICES

Information Sheet

Coming Ready or Not: Chinese students in Australia. Their motivations, their language proficiency and their impact on Australia's tertiary environment.

Nature of the research

I am undertaking research with international Chinese students enrolled in Australian universities, to establish whether they are sufficiently well prepared linguistically to undertake tertiary studies. Components of the research relate to how international students from China manage their studies and assessment if they experience language difficulties, and whether universities' current English language level is appropriate. The research is being completed as a requirement towards the award of a Doctorate of Education.

After completing a Master of Arts (Applied Linguistics) at Griffith University in 2003, I worked in China as the academic principal of a foundation program with affiliations with 25 Australian universities. The idea for the study grew out of my experience with the students of that program.

You will be one of between four and six students who will be interviewed three times, for approximately one hour each time, over an 18 month period. The interviews will be semi-structured, and will examine your experiences of education both in China and Australia, how you manage the assessment in your program, and whether you feel your English language level is sufficient to undertake tertiary studies in a second language. Other data will be collected from a focus group of international students, complemented by interviews with lecturers, other academics and senior university management.

The purpose of the research is to identify an appropriate language level to enable international students from China to successfully undertake tertiary studies in Australia. It is expected the study could be of interest to a number of education sector organisations, including universities and language learning facilities both within Australia and offshore, as well as teachers and students.

Research team

I, Robyn Pacey, am the student researcher for the project. The study's two Principal Supervisors, Doctor Maria Dobrenov-Major, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, School of Cognition, Language and Special Education, Griffith University, and Associate Professor Rod Gardner, A/Deputy Dean, Research, School of Education and Professional Studies (Brisbane, Logan), Mt Gravatt Campus, Griffith University are the study's chief investigators.
Dr Dobrenov-Major (phone 3875 5680, email m.dobrenov-major@griffith.edu.au) or Associate Professor Gardner (phone 3735 3472, email r.gardner@griffith.edu.au can be contacted if you have any further questions in relation to the research.

Confidentiality

Your identity will not be revealed by the researchers.

Appendix 2

Consent form

Title of the Study: Coming Ready or Not. Chinese students in Australia. Their motivation, language proficiency, and impact on Australia's tertiary environment.

Methodology: The study will involve interviewing 4-6 students from Griffith, Macquarie and other Universities for approximately one hour, at six-monthly intervals, over a period of 18 months. The method will be a semi-structured interview, preceded by a focus group of international students, and complemented by interviews with students' teachers and other academics and senior university management. Interviews will be audio-recorded, which will be destroyed on completion of the research. The audio recordings will not be used for any other purposes.

Reason for the Study: It is anticipated the study will identify an appropriate language level to enable international students from China to successfully undertake tertiary studies in Australia.

Confidentiality: The identity of the students will not be revealed by the researcher. Participants will be identified by a coded name, and their confidentiality maintained. The data will be de-personalised and will be held for five years with the Faculty of Education, in a secure facility.

Feedback: Transcripts of your individual interviews will be available should you wish to read them. You will also be notified of the results when the research is finished.

Concerns or complaints: Any complaints in regard to the study can be expressed to the Manager, Research Ethics, Office for Research, Bray Centre, Nathan Campus, Griffith University, telephone 3735 5585 or email research-ethics@griffith.edu.au

I have read the information sheet and the consent form. I agree to participate in the study, "Chinese students in Australia: Are they sufficiently well-prepared linguistically to undertake tertiary studies, and how do they cope if they're not" and give my consent freely. I understand that the study will be carried out as described in the information statement, a copy of which I have retained. I understand that whether or not I decide to participate is my decision and will not affect my studies. I also understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time and that I do not have to give reasons for withdrawing. I have had all questions answered to my satisfaction.

Signatures:

Participant ……

Researcher……

EBL/45/08/HREC Students

Students will be identified by a coded name, and your confidentiality maintained. Audio recordings of your interviews will be destroyed at the completion of the research project. The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University's Privacy Plan at www.gu.edu.au/ua/aa/vc/pp or telephone 3735 5585.

Concerns or complaints

Any concerns or complaints in regard to the study can be expressed to the Manager, Research Ethics, Office for Research, Bray Centre, Nathan Campus, Griffith University, telephone 735 5585 or email research-ethics@griffith.edu.au

Feedback

Transcripts of your interviews will be available should you wish to read them, and you and other participants will be notified of the results when the research is finished.

EBL/45/08/HREC:

Student participants

First interview with Crystal: Tape 12

R: OK Crystal, your Chinese name?

C: CH

R: OK and how old are you? What was your date of birth?

C: 6 November 1987.

R: 1987. OK, and where were you born

C: Fujian Province. Just a small city called Zheng He

R: OK I want to talk to you about what it was like going to school in China. What's your first memory of being at school....or some of your early memories about being at school.

C: Ah .....at about kindergarten. At that time I was lonely because my parents they fighting each other and I went to school every day by myself and I have no friends because I don't know why ...maybe they just leave me alone but other children and no one teach me about writing ... or ....you know I think my childhood is not good.

R: Not good. You went to kindergarten and then primary school and where did you go after primary school?

C: Primary school? When I was six years old

R: So six to what age you were at primary school?

C: When I was first time went to primary school is 1993 September.

R: What was it like at school. Not so much in primary school but let's look at your high school experience…some primary school. What was it like? How many students were in your class?

C: In my class? Around fifty

R: About fifty. That was at primary school....and what about at high school?

C" High school? About fifty-five.

R: About 55. So at high school you did what? Three years of junior high school and three years of senior high school?.

C: Yeah, junior high we have more students. In primary school to junior school you don't need to have really serious exam to pass like with your address you went to that school.

R: Do it wasn't until senior school that you got serious about exams.

C: Yeah, senior school to high school you got very serious exam. It takes three days. The good student…..they need to see your points and the good students can to go the best high school.

R: So we have kindergarten, primary school, what comes after that?

C: Junior school, then high school three years. Primary school takes six years.

R: So where do you do the serious exams?

C: Junior high school....in high school to university you get two days exam.... gao kao....serious

R: that decides?

C: Yeah, kao means exam, examination, and gao means high.

R: and that decides what university you go to?

C: Yeah….I haven't …. I didn't attend the class because it went to OZ when I finished two years high school.

R: Two years of high school then you went to OZ for a year? And then you came to Australia?

C You finish two years you can get the degree. And the last year is for revising...for preparing for university tests.

R: Tell me what it was like at high school

C: At high school it was very competitive. You need to get up….I was living in school. I need to get up five to six in the morning and went out around 6.20 and went to classroom for reading in the morning and we have class..we have break at 6.40 and we have class from 7.20. and 7.20 to 11.40 you have class time. We have four classes. Everyone takes forty five minutes. You have ten minutes break during the afternoon started at 10 past 2 and finished at 5.40 and in the night we have two class but it's for doing assignment or just revise. But sometimes our teacher needs you do some practice.
R: So that was like a boarding school was it?

C: You can choose to live at home but because I want to save some time for sleep or eating so I choose to live at the school.
R: And so in that class how many students were in those classes?
C: 55
R: 55. And what subjects did you learn?
C: We learn geography, biology, Chinese, English, Maths....It's like in first level we have 11 subjects need to study at the same time and move to second level you have finish exam before you move to second level .. that's for getting your certificate of preparation. If you pass your exam you can get your certificate. And then we can choose like two different kind of class . One is for like writing, news, at least kind of ....the other one is for doing ..um. if you are good at the maths you can choose another one, if you are good at the Chinese or English , politic you can choose this one. I don't know how to …….
R: So you go from one stream in effect.
C: So finally, you don't need to study 11 subjects. Because another one is finished.

R: So you just go for your best subjects all the time. You keep studying until you choose your best four? When did you first start learning English
C: In junior school.
R: And think about those lessons. What was your teacher like? Chinese teacher or English teacher?
C: Chinese. They just teach .... the first class is for , 'what's your name?' and 'my name is.' And I remember the test book it said we can do number for middle school, and How are you and I am fine thank you....and you. And how do you do, like this. But when I come, came to Australia more than three years, I have never heard 'how do you do'. Laughter
R It's quite formal.
C" We're always going, how are you, how have you been, how are you.
R Yes, it's very formal English. So that ....when you were learning that English, that English probably didn't help you much here?
C: Ah, it didn't help much for spoken English...it's always like grammar, writing and reading. We focus on these three parts.
R: So lots of vocabulary too?
C: Lots of ….We do … like teacher say one word and we need to write-down the word, the different meaning of the words, the property of the words. And noun or adjective something like that.
R: So you didn't get a lot of opportunity to speak?
C: No.
R: With 55 students in the class probably not
C" Only me....laughter . Cause I'm the representative of English in the class in high school
R: That means you were the best student?
C" Usually .... very excellent student .....it interests me. And I need to collect their assignment every day. And I need to speak in class and before class I need to go to in front of classroom and ask them to open which …….and we read something.
R: And so you speak to them in English and

C: Yeah I think so. I'm very good at doing option question…multiple choice and like every day we have practice book and every day we have assignment and the teacher give you the right answer. And before she give me the right answer she will ask us what we think is right and about the reason and I always be right
R: Very good. That's terrific when you only started in junior school.
C: That's its very hard for your grammar and academic English but for spoken English I don't think so.
R: Thinking about your teacher, do you think she was an experienced English teacher.
C: I don't know experienced…a different English teacher. I like her teaching style. For example I don't like…….teach the question how to get a high mark in the exam and teach me like how to do the correction of vocabulary every day while some teacher didn't tell me about how to study she just know about right answer and not explain details to me and she didn't explain to me why she just know the right answer
R: but didn't know why, just the right answer
C: Some experienced teacher she would have told me to memorise by collecting different type of English like why we use s, like why we use ……..at the same time as ask you to memorise…they teach me that way.
R: And you think that's important.
C:It's important
R: What was your teacher's pronunciation like do you think. When you think back on it, do you think she had much experience with native English speakers.
C: No. We only have one teacher and he's a man and he usually travelling with western people around so his pronunciation was very good but he's no good at teaching. About getting right answers that sort of thing.
R: OK….let's start off by talking about …you studied in OG. It is a bit awkward because I was your teacher but try to forget that. Was it a different style of teaching?

C: Yeah of course
R: With all of your teachers – not just your English and Business teacher but all of your teachers?
C: Different from high school.
R How was the teaching style different?
C: The teaching style different. Specific
R Yeah, was it I mean, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but I'm just trying to tease out the difference between how you learnt in high school and how you learnt when you were at the college.
C: The first time I went to O Zee I felt really really relaxed because we don't need to get up so early in the morning and we have class like 9 o'clock and finished at 3 and then remaining time we can control by ourself and I can do a lot of thing what I like and assignments not so much and I like phenomenon around the class and we don't need to sit like a high school like .. in rows....we can change the tables positions every day and we can sit with your friends what you like every day you can change one.
R" Does that help? Did it help your learning or would you have preferred a bit more structure?
C: I think it's helpful
R How?
C: Like, we have more discussing and we do some more discussion about the topic. In high school we don't discuss with each other. We just receive what the teacher give you. And we have no mind store ... mind store is the first I heard in O Zee I never heard of that before .
R: And what do you mean by that ... what was meant by it?

C: Like, answers not only one. But in high school, most of the time, answers only one. And all multiple choice, you can only think one. I think western education style allowed you to

have different thinking. But in Chinese gao kao they have very very specific answers. If you didn't mention this word or this sentence you didn't get a mark.
R: Whereas often there's more than one correct answer? And you found that here? I mean I suppose at the time you thought there was only one correct answer?
C: Mmmm...and what ever you doing wrong or right , good or bad, teacher in Ozee will encourage you. That you are are good, you are not the worst one. But in high school we have mostly exam and every time when you choose number one number two in a list and publish the list in the classroom and everyone can know about your results in every subject and next time the position of your sitting for exam is depending on your result.
R: How did that make you feel?
C" Very very depressed...(?) Cos like the first time I sit in second time and the next time I sit in the third room and the classmates said 'why are you here, last time you were in second room', this means you .....
R: So, not very motivating, that system?
C: For some students. For some good students they think it's okay, it doesn't matter but for the bad result student you feel very bad in the ...month? but they can't speak out loud. As we have Saturday we have class and we need to pay it we need to pay it and some students they don't want to attend but the teacher said you can not come but anything related to the exam result we don't respond...we don't responsibility for that . If you get bad result it's because you are not attending the class...
R" The Saturday classes?
C" So they forced us. Even though we don't want to attend.
R: That puts a lot of pressure on young students.
C: Mmm. If we got a public holiday, we have one day have break but we need to make up two days. I don't want to have less public holidays. To make up class two days.
R: That's a lot of pressure.
C: That's a lot of pressure.
R: Moving now to .....when did you do your first IELTS test?
C: 10 December 2005.
R: And what were your results – do you remember?
C: 5
R: 5?
C: Yep
R: And that was to get entrance to the school – to Ozee?
C: No, I arrived in Ozee in July.
R: So you did it afterwards?
How many IELTS tests have you done since then?
C: One
R: One? Just one. And what did you get for your last one
C: I got 5.5

R: and that was before you came to Australia?
C: I got all . ..... specific
R: Do you remember what your test results were in the four skills – in the first one?
C: The first one is spoken is 6 and others is 5
R: And in the second one?
C: The second one is spoken 6 and writing 6, reading 5.5. and listening 5.
The second one I was planning to do six but I think I was not enough preparation on listening so that's why I only got 5.5.
R: So when you came into your undergraduate degree did you come first to straight to your university or did you have to do another language course?
C: I have to take 8 weeks language course.
R: And where did you do that?
C: In the ..... centre in Macquarie University.

R: And then you went into your undergraduate degree in Macquarie?
C: No, I withdraw before the semester started.
R: OK so you enrolled in Macquarie but didn't get there. Instead you went to what college?
C: ICMS? It's a college they have cooperation relationship with Macquarie University.
R: And what did you study there?
C: Associated degree of business administration in hospitality management
R" And have you finished that?
C: No I only finished two semester and doing my industry training for two semesters so totally four semesters ...four terms and then I withdraw again. I finished diploma course but I didn't get certificate because I have not enough time in my industry. Is not my problem because the hotel is not so busy can not get 1200 hours in eight months.
R: Couldn't actually finish it?
C: No.
R What hotel was that?

C First one is Vibe hotel, and for housekeeping and then I went to Menzies
R: So what did you do after you left ICMS?
C: I transferred to Holmes institute
R: And what are you studying there?
C: Bachelor of Professional Accounting and I get credits from my previous study.
R: So you got some credits for that?
R You still haven't done another ielt s test, another language test. OK so you got credit for that and you finish that this semester
C: Yep
R: Okay. Why did you choose accounting?
C: Firstly because of immigration. And another reason is that my father is very keen on accountant. He started his career as an accountant first.
R: And also for permanent migration?
C: Yep, firstly, but not only.
R: We'll come back to that because we talked about that before, but let's just stick with accounting for a minute. Many students choose accounting because their English is not so great and they feel they won't have to write a lot of assignments. Was that a consideration for you?

C: I can do it by myself.
R: So that wasn't a consideration . It was mostly because of your family and for PR?
C: I don't think because English not so good so that they choose accounting is a bad choice because accounting also have a lot of academic .....if English not good I don't think it's a good avoidance.
R: I agree with you but I still think a lot of students choose it.....
Interrupts
C: No, I don't think so. Maybe if their English not good they choose TAFE or something....pause
Even TAFE they have assignments.
R: Of course, of course they do. Just coming back to your study of English, what's been the most difficult part of learning English for you.
C: Reading, reading and writing.
R: Even though you did a lot of reading and writing back in China?
C: I don't think I did a lot. Because in high school reading is very simple. We have five articles in one exam but at that time I didn't find any difficulty until I came to Ozee and I have to read IELTS article it's very hard.
R: Yes, it is very hard, and I can tell you a lot of native English speakers would never get a high score on some of the IELTS reading tests.

C: It's very hard and it's depends too on the question ...the question asked is very tricky.
R: And can sometime seem to have two meanings.
C: Two meanings yeah, and sometimes says the opposite words or similar meaning words instead of words that appear in original article. If you don't have enough vocabulary it's very hard too.
R: Yes it is and as I said to you, a lot of native English speakers would find it difficult. I know they do,.
Australian English can be quite informal. Is that an issue for you?
C: You mean for my English
R: Yeah, lots of slang and what have you.
C: No I think it's fine.
Because lots of people speak to me I didn't find a lot of slang but oral I already know the slang. Like gidday....
That's because I was working in hotel and my team only got one Chinese speaker

R: I am going to come to that in a minute.
R: I just want to ask you. Most academic courses require you to have an ielts 6. Do you think that's high enough.
C: It's not (/)enough enough for your academic study.
R: But you only got a 5.5 and then you did a 10 week language course. Do you think you'd gone up to a 6 by the time you started your course?
C: I don't think it's enough for me to study in college. Because I still find a lot of difficulty in group discussing and doing assignment and doing summary from article. A lot of kind of assignment like you collect thirty articles and doing each one for 200 summary is not easy.
R: Do you think then there should have been an exit test from your language course to make sure you were ready to study? Or do you think it's okay the way it is?
C: Mmmm.....I don't think it's if the student doing the test before they go to university is helpful because sometimes our English skill is improving during the study. Sometimes at the beginning I found of difficulty but i think study step by step and up to your language is going up.
R: Are there other ways better do you think to assess whether a student is ready for tertiary study? Are there other better ways, like instead of just a pure language test, do you think there are other ways of judging whether a student is ready to study?
C: Because I know a lot of Chinese student, they are good at doing exams. So maybe it's not really a test that can judge exactly level English. .....can do very well in reading, multiple choice, probably can't speak out. Very poor in writing and listening/
R: What do some of your other Chinese friends .... do they have difficulty in studying in Australia?
C: You know as difficult....?
R: Just thinking about your other Chinese friends. Do they say they have any difficulties?
C: Yeah, I do have a lot of friends and they have difficulty in study. For example they study four subject s and they fail two .....(
Plagiarism charges/exclusion for cheating??) each semester,.
R: How do they get through their exams, then, do they ever?
C: i THINK they have not enough preparation before exam . they just treat exam like very easy one but exam is not. Even private school.
R: Do you know of any other students who use other methods of getting through exams, for example, do you know of anyone who's had someone else take a test for them, or help them with their writing, check their assignments, and what have you?
C: I have .....of this kind of job. They charge the price and it's guaranteed you can't be found.
R: What's that to do? That's to write someone's paper?
C: Not someone's (??) paper is very common. It takes hundred dollar .. more than two hundred dollar per thousand.

C: Yeah, that's common I think. Most student's bad they just felt from our college because they were picked out from the school and they moved to a private school and they are purpose is not study here they are just being here
R: And what's their purpose in being here?
C: Mmmm.....give parents the I was in Australia and I study there. When they finish they just go back.
R: So, they get other people to write their assignments. Anything else they get people to do?
C: On line test.
R: What do you mean....explain that to me.
C: Macquarie University they some subjects they have an online quiz every week. It's five per cent of the whole subject every week so they will give their id and their password to another person who is in ...that kind of student who already graduated from this subject and have very good results on this and they will help the student do it and get the 5% percent.
R: And what does that account for in say 100%
C: They just I think each time they need to pay the person who do it for them and they said it like 100% if 20 multiple choice, I guarantee 15 of that is correct.
R: Did you get any help from anyone to get through your degree or have you done it all yourself?

C: Mmmm.
R: Have you got any friends who've every looked at your work or given you guidance?
C: Anna
R: How does that work?
C: We always discuss what the lecture going to expect before the examination. We talk about the topic and guess which part is most important and which kind of question he will ask and how to answer how to do answer about structure or step how to do it.
R: That's a very good strategy for .....
C: Anna does very well in academic.
R: Why is that – does she just have an ability to you think?
C: I think it's ....I'm a person who's affects by the environment. So that is why Sometimes I think she is very good.
R: So, if you've written a paper, for example, would you ask Anna to look at that paper to make sure?
C: No.
R: You'd never do that.?
C: No, because I had other people to change my ways and I need to redo it.
If she's been given one once good and she asks you to change a sentence, I'm a person that do once and I think it okay and I hand in and I think it's good to pass and I don't care how marks there are going to be.
R: Are there resources in place in your university to help international students?
C: Ah, in my school we only get a small library and we not using a lot because it's noisy. They speak aloud and I usually use the library to hand in some assignment and download some lecture materials or they do .....
R: I just want to have a look now at how your classes are set up here. Thinking about all of your studies, not just at the school you're at at the moment. How are classes set up? I mean, are there big classes, small classes, tutorials, lectures?
C: Usually lectures, ...and we have one lecture, sometimes have two tutorial because they have too much student, they can't do tutorial. You have to separate and .....
R: How many students in the tutorial?
C: Exactly in our school like company law .....subject have 200 but the room is limited so they can one hundred people is already a crowd so usually have one hundred people or more coming.

R: In the tutorial?
C: In the tutorial we are around 20 to thirty.
R: In the tutorial do you do a lot of talking, group work, asking questions, do you do presentations.
C: We don't do a lot of discussing. And it's like lecture tell you the answer, explain you why and how to relate it to your lectures' content and we do the presentation for some assignments.
R: Do you like doing that?
C: I don't like it.
R: No? Why is that?
C: I feel nervous to speak at the front of a lot of people. And I'm afraid I don't know what to talk to them, sometimes. But if I ready standing about the topic and ready understanding of the structure of the powerpoints then I will know what will I speak to.
R: So if you're really well prepared it's easier for you.
C: Yeah, and maybe because of academic language, academic language is not good enough, so I usually use very simple language to explain .....that's why I have not enough minutes to talk
R: And I suppose that wasn't the style you were used to in China – doing presentations.
C: No.
R Did you ever have to do a presentation in China?
C: No. I heard the presentation word in Ozee first time and before I see the drama in the television and I saw them do a promotion about one product and they have the powerpoint introduce that one and at that time i not know that one was called presentation. And when I came to Ozee only know presentations giving presents to other people .....and that's the first time I did presentation.
R: Bit challenging for you. Just coming now to going through your studies, have you ever had an assessment deferred on medical grounds. Sometimes students do that when the pressure is too much.
C: No, I don't like to do that.
R: Why
C: Because I think some student they don't want to do all the exam at the same day they want to defer and they provide the medical certificate. I don't like lasting that time too longer, and you will feel lonely because other students finish exam and you still need to revise and waiting until that day to do it and usually a deferred exam is harder than original exam.
R: laughter.....all right.

Just finally, over the course of your studies, since you started studying in a western environment, include your Unilearn program too, have you found your teachers helpful in terms of preparing you for study or guiding you or supporting you.
C: Yes, I find them very helpful....most of them.
R: In the current college?
C: `In current college or msm or in language centre. They all helpful. They investigate your academic level and if i am too weak they will talk to me give me some consultation, give me suggestion.
R: Was that something you ever had in China, if you were weak?
C: Yeah, teacher will ask you to talk but the difference is in western environment teacher will not allow other students to use the difference ways to look you because they do this by hiding they will ask you to go to office and have a seat, take a seat, take it easy and talk like a friend, but in China student will ask you in front of students and come to talk and if i get a bad results the worst result in the end at the last time and all the student sknow it and the teacher will ask you to talk ask you what's your reason you think you get .....bad words and about how do you feel like that (quite emotional).
R: Mmmm. That's a lot of pressure. Let's just finish off by saying, you graduate this semester . Where to from here for you.
C: Where to from here? You mean next step?

R: Yeah
C: I am going to move to a master degree
R: At what university?
C: At University of New South Wales...masters of commerce in accounting because i found i want to be accountant in the future not the same purpose as the student for immigration purpose so i don't think i learn enough in my bachelor degree because that school the academic level is not good as other government university and i waste too much time and i am not good study during this period so i want to have .....in master degree and I hope I can be an accountant.
(Question for next time: When did you change from pr to career????)

R: You said before that you were going back to work in your family business but will you still apply for permanent residence in Australia so that you have both options?
C: Yeah i am planning if i can if i can preparation all application before i went back china i will apply offshore opportunity.
R: So you'd have two options. You could live and work i your family business but you'd still be a permanent resident of Australia
C: If I can. If offshore is not allowed me to apply I just go back directly.

First Interview with Alice

R: OK I'm going to start by asking you your Chinese name and the city where you were born.

A OK my Chinese name is Wang…., is my full name and my date of birth is 29 October and I born in 1987 and the city is Fujian, actually Fujian province and …..city and it's like medium size or small size of city.

R OK I am going to start by asking you what it was like going to school in China. You did what? Kindergarten, primary school, high school?

A Yeah, in China is like how to say, big class, huge classes and yeah, in my experience it's around 40 to 50. The maximum one I have before is like almost 60. it's huge. It's just one classes with one lecturer every day with one teachers. Every day we stay in the same.

R What time did you start school in the morning and what time did you finish?

A Seven thirty in the morning and finish 11.30 is like morning session and go to lunch two to three hours break and come back 2.30 and after that 2.30 pm depends on the winter or summer and finish around 5.30 and for high school because we got to study …and our lectures put on the night study as well. But it like you can come or you can choose to stay at home study. It's like starting at around 6.30 or 7 o'clock after your dinner time to 9.30 or 10 o'clock depends.

R And then did you have a lot of homework?

A Yes, we do every day. After you in that time in my experience I feel I never finish my homework every day because we got seven or eight subjects to study in the same like three months or so. We got 7 to 8 subjects to study. Each subject has the requirements for you. Cause I think the teachers, they have a competitions between. That's the situation. They want to students get a high average of marks.

R What subjects did you study?

A Mmm for the high school is like firs t the language is like Chinese and the maths and the English and geography and politics and s...physics and geography and history and only seven.

R Did you do that all the way through high school or

A All the way, like, two years, I got three years to do I do two years at the beginning because at the end of the year kinda like the final exam to assess university. Yeah they only have, they are saying we got two groups of students, one is choosing history or geography this kind of subject and the other one is choosing physics, or something science like. That's why the third year we don't have to do if you are part of this student you don't have to do. That's the way they do but it's still you like have to pass before the second year you have to pass the other subjects at the first you will be allowed to do the exam to assess the university.

R So it's very competitive to get into university in China?

A Yes even in my city, it's a small city they don't have enough teachers in high schools, even go to the high schools is a lot of competition cause in my town there was like I think it is

7000 in my memory. 7000 students is going to do the exams but is available position for the high school I think is only half.

R So half don't even finish high school.

A Yeah, I've been told by my teachers. You are lucky one, you can get, because in my city they have 15 suburbs and they want to come to the city to do the high school because they don't have a high school in the suburb so

R So of those students, how many would get in, say in your class of 50 or 60, how many would get to university.

A Well in my class I think right now I think in my situation, my class has probably forty because I am in the top high school and they got forty but actually forty of them go to the university, the meaning of university is kind of different, like some people go to the government university but some people just go to a private university, actually is not actually really standard as that one.

R So it's a lower standard.

A Yes, much much lower. And much more expensive. Just because they didn't reach the points

R So they pay for private education.

A Yeah, they pay a lot.

R When did you first start learning English?

A Um I think is in my year seven, is like middle school. Year seven.

R And what was the focus then on- what did you learn?

A It just like grammars, and lot of vocab…what you call it? vocabulary, and I don't think ah much more grammars you need to memorise and you never got to use it .laughs

R You never got to use it?

A No, never. even my English teacher in middle school, her can't really speak English in my point of view….so she never read out ...In the English class she use Chinese to explain to us and she never like have some communication in English with us – she only explain the grammar every day and like it's hard only to memorise the grammar without using ...

R Absolutely ... both laugh

R And just coming back for a moment and to your classes, big classes....what was it like? How did the teacher teach those big classes?

A They just like teachers just write notes on the blackboard every time just write notes and we used to have a .....with note taking like every time we just taking notes and you have to spend a lot of time to read the notes after your class cause teachers trying to push a lot for us.

R Push towards what?

A Like, the contents maybe like whole classes are full, we don't have time to talk to the teacher in class...it's impossible in class...impossible. And you just listening, no questions, if he or her asks some questions it's going to be …like if one or two minutes but they don't usually ask the questions. It's time consuming. NO

R Did you feel frustrated by that?

A Really, I can't fit for that kind of study, educations, I feel really stressed and I even cannot like some people are really good at understanding actually they are really good when they are taking notes but I can't. When I'm in the class I'm just taking notes is nothing, is just gone when I'm writing something, and I have to spend like I feel like I have to spend twice as much time as some people. Some people just give up, it's impossible for them to finish it. They very lazy or I think it's kinda lazy. It's just too much for some people because people like, people have a different ability to do their studies. Some of them need a slower and some of them can be faster and some of them …and always the teachers concentrate on the two sides the best one or the bottom one. The middle one like me they always stay in the middle, like, I'm not really good and I'm not really bad it's always like they have after exam they have a list of school with your result and where is your position you can see like I always like 50 people I always stay in the 20, 21 like 20 to 30 or this kind of students teachers not really I don't think care about you or think about you because the one they must communicate with is more than 10 or top ten. Yeah that's the way they do it because they think those people the bottom ten they need help, the top ten they like them, because they do well in their class. Yeah.

R Just thinking about your English teacher again

A Yeah, English teacher?
R Yeah, she wasn't really fluent in English?

A She was really bad. Sighs. She was …it's really like I got a memory about that. She was really bad. But like she was trying to read the whole paragraph for us once, she couldn't finish it. Like, it was amazing for me! And after class I talked to my parents, like my English teacher she could not even finish a paragraph and how like she expect her student to finish this paragraph. Laughs.

R Yeah, it's really difficult.

A Yeah, it's really difficult and her pronunciation was just … so difficult for her … because it's like she didn't read out the English even read not speak but read out the English not well. It's like saying this word and what this used for and what's goes with this sentence and what this structure to my memorise my English and I do really bad during …..

R So when did your English start to get so good?

A Ah, I think it's when I go to OG, yeah,

R The foundation?

A Yeah, the foundation …with you.

R Thank you (both laugh)

A yeah, it's better. It's like generally changed. It's kinda like we get a chance to talk and the confidence to talk and also with reading and like how to say the way we reading and the

concentrate we do the listening, speaking is much more useful, is much more practice for the real world, is not only grammar but I think it's kinda usual where you reading and always use the grammar becoming natural, it's a natural thing and when you get to this stage and you go back to study the grammars its easier, it's much easier, it's like, kinda like easier, but it's just like after I study the foundation I went back to my home town and I got a waiting for my visa to come to here and I used to talk to my English teacher and say now I'm doing a different way and I wasn't really good in English in your way, in your way I wasn't really good, even the exams I wasn't really good . It's because they are examining the cons….it's like they confuse you, it's like they try to confuse you. The grammar is really confusing, like they put a twenty multiple choice and every answer are similar. Like, actually, sometimes in casual way when you speaking English or spoken English it can be in that way, it not totally wrong, but you can only pick one …..it's too hard.

R It's quite formal?

A Yeah, I think that kind of exam is too hard for the student. They can't speak any English with like this speak they study English without speak.

R How did your teacher react when you told her you were doing so well with English?

A She just say yeah, of course is ….she gotta notice like that, the education of the English. The education system of English is not really right…….but……she say to me we got to follow exams. The exam her means the ones assessed to the university – because we have to teach for the exams.

A Yeah and in my experience I used to meet one teacher – he's really young – and he his English is really good in my …from the speaking …he's the only one speaking English to us when he did classes but he has has been treated not really good English teacher in our high school ..cos his students always (NOT??) got high scores because his not teaching the exams to us he's teaching conversations but his students I think they over like speaking is much better and they at least they got to use some English because he says English is just a tool. It's not a like it's not like something else like science you need to study in that way. In his opinion but it was wasn't fit in that time in that place, that's he say to us, and he feel hard. He can't change anything like everyone knows there is something wrong. Even like the government or education office they notice there is something wrong in the English study system. They want to change but it is hard. Like currently too many student it's still population pressures for the student to go to high school or to university so they have to set up the difficult or like in the other way to select the students to all in the other we can say to allow some student to come to university and some of them just miss their chance. They can't have that chance for them. They can't ….for them……

R Just moving on to your study of English, when did you first IELTS test?

A It was during the foundation – I think it was term 3.

R And what was your score?

A Five point five.

R In all four…

A All four is….I think is only five in writing, yeah the others, and the speaking's six. Yeah.

R And have you done one since?

A Yeah, just once.

R And what was your score then?

A Ah, just once.

R Oh and you have another one coming up soon.

So you came to Australia with a 5.5. Did you go straight into your studies?

A No, I did a language course with Macquarie University.

R So how long was that?

A It was fifteen weeks.
R Fifteen. You didn't have another test. You went straight into your degree?

A Yeah, straight into. Because students after 15 weeks they divide you. Five weeks is one like one semester, one terms. They got an exam to pass us to decide if we can go on.
R So five weeks testing

A Test you…five week test you.
R Did you have a final exam to go to Macquarie?
A Yeah, we do. It's like actually I got a pass I think the assessments is like you have to pass everything to go to Macquarie University.

R And what did you enrol in Macquarie University?

A Accounting.

R Why did you choose accounting?

A This one it was the influence of my family. Like my mother and father they wanted me to be a professional like is like accounting sounds like it's professional and skilful and you can get a good career from that's why so before I came to here I really have to think about which major I have to do and I think accounting like if my parents my family recommend it it's going to be good for me, that's what I think. And I didn't really think this is for me because at that time I don't really know accounting career going to be, how that career's going to be. So and I just choose this one to come to here.

R Some students have told me they went to accounting because they thought they wouldn't have to write quite so many papers. Was that a consideration for you?

A No I'm fine to write, yeah, for this .....I tried to think a lot in that way. Actually I am fine to write okay.

R And one of the other things that students said to me was that at that time, accounting gave them a good chance at pr.

A Yeah, that's another consideration.

R Was that a consideration for you?

A Yeah was a part of consideration to take to my parents to take it to consideration.

R How long did you stay at Macquarie – because you left Macquarie?

A I think it's like I finished language course, I haven't started accounting with Macquarie university because after the language course I don't really like the environment in Macquarie university and it's like .....like, just .....university. I don't know, like surroundings are like, I Alice feel I'm in oversea, I'm speaking English, I want to be in that way, but actually in Macquarie I can't feel that way, it's like there are too many Asian students um the I just don't like that environment that's why I changed to the hospitality management.

R Alright, ok so you didn't even start with Macquarie, you went straight into hospitality management, and who was that with?

A Macquarie, actually under Macquarie University.

R So you just changed your major.

A Yeah your major

R OK so how long did you do that? Did you graduate from that?

A Yeah, I got a diploma from that.
R Diploma of?

A Diploma of Hospitality Management.

R OK that took how long>

A It took one and a half years actually...two years.

R Two years, okay. And from there what are you doing now?

A Now I'm doing the ah professional accounting with Holmes University now.

R OK and how long will that take?

A It's taken another one and a half year and I finish it soon. I've already done one year already.

R OK so when will you graduate?

A Ah, in July, this July (2010).

R OK, what will you do then?

A I will do the Master degree with , I'm deciding now whether the Sydney University or New South Wales, where I gonna go, because I gonna go to I hope .....better education and they a got a better results of education.

R OK...obviously you're a really good student, but some students struggle at university so I just want you to think back to your experiences and think back to some of your friends. What do some of your Chinese friends say about studying in Australia? Do they find it difficult?

A Yeah, they do, a lot of my friends. And even it's becoming .reasons or the factors they choosing university, they choosing the one they go into, this college or this university ah easier, or I don't know how they say, because I never have the experience which one easier or they just depend how you do it, like, it's really your own thing, like you say it's really which university, but for them it does, they say, oh now this university is easy to pass under this measure. Yeah, it's becoming a factor this choosing.

R OK

A And also.....

R Is Macquarie University seen as a hard university?

A Yeah, under accounting, yeah, as they say, and they cannot even finish it. They always fail. Because in my case my boyfriend's in Macquarie University and he's doing really hard work but the way he's doing it his study I don't think he's right. Laughs. I don't think the way he studies is right.
Like, for my way, I study, I do a lot of writing, and analyses, and not just straight away memorise, like, you memorise you can't straight away use it. And it's getting harder from year one to year three, the year three is the hardest one. Like for them, they just struggling like you say, oh it's so difficult, because I think the year three, the subjects is more academic and text books are not that easy to read at that time, so if you don't do well before you don't have a good foundation to get into the much more academic level. It's much more difficult.

R: So how do they get through exams and assessments? You hear about all sorts of stories and some of the people in my study have told me about students who get other students to write papers for them or they pay to have assignments written.

A Yeah, it does happen.

R You have experience of that?

A I don't really have, because I never give my paper to someone else.

R Yeah, but you know that that happens?

A Yeah, I know that it happens. Like they paying for, cos some people ask me to do the assignment for them, and they paying for me how much is .. I won't do that because I can't like, under my .....I don't want their money. Like, you have to do something by yourself and yesterday like I just one case happened to me, he told me like, my friend, he told me 'I failed.'.. I was passing the course and this term, his special friend used his assignment and not even changing anything to submit it and the result came out with 100% match and the lecturer was looking for which one was 100% match and it came back to him and say which one is your assignment, and like, I can't pass you it's unacceptable.

R So the student who had done the good paper, failed, sorry I'm not quite with you.

A Yeah, the student A gave the paper to the student B, the student A has passed this course already and this assignment was last term and this term, because similar one, but not exactly the same one and student B just grabbed straight away from Student A to submit it and cos they thinking the lecturer shouldn't notice about that because there are so many assignments but finally the lecturer found about, and said Student B failed, and also Student A failed in this case, and the Student A was unhappy and angry and but the result ..but we got a college policy on that, if you found that way is kind of not ethical way, yeah, so you

R So he failed...what? the term, or just one course?

A One course

R One course. I think too at Macquarie and at other universities they have online quizzes as part of their assessment

A Yeah, yeah, we do that as well

R And does it go on with that.

A Yeah, I think so, but I haven't like for myself, yeah some students they asking for others to do the, that's the truth, even my boyfriend. That's the truth; he's always asking my help. Like, even like I did it for him, because sometimes, he can't really get into the topic. He needs my help, can you just explain to me in Chinese or something like that. I don't like to do that because I think if you taking this course you should be able to understand at least the topic. If you didn't catch the main things you can't do anything...like just nothing.

R What are the other things that students do ...and I know this because they've told me but also because I teach I know this, that when they've got a lot of assessment coming up and they can't cope, they go and see a doctor and get a medical certificate and defer their exams.

A Yeah, yeah. That's what I heard. I haven't seen this but I heard a lot about it. And I talk to some of them like what is the difference to do an exam later, you not going to study. For this kind of student, actually, yeah, even they don't do the exam right now, or the assessment right now, but pushing like ten days or even give like a month to do the reason doesn't change a lot. Not really. They just not want to do so many thing during the same time. Like, it's the same, doesn't change anything. Actually I don't know where they get the medical thing for that.

R Does the university give a lot of help to international students?
A I think for the university do open some help, language help, although assignment writings help but they do but actually the student go looking for them is not like many people, I feel like they put up ....every maybe Tuesday or Wednesday afternoon. You got two hours you come to see us and we can help you with your assignment or something like that. Actually not many student come.

R Why is that?

A Is like if you not organised it's too casually, it's like we got a one class in which day and which student should come, like, or like accounting student you should attend this class, I think that way all the students they going to be there.

R So like if they make it compulsory

.....
R Chinese students who are struggling here, do you think it's because of their previous education experience in China, where they have to memorise, memorise, memorise.

A Yeah, and they do a lot of effect, I think there is a lot of effect from the previous educations. The way they study, a lot of student they still cannot change. They still keep in the lecturers and even if they don't know, they don't ask. They just rather to ask their classmate yeah, they got a .....with lectures. In China, it's like teachers you always.....the

teachers, you can't really talk to them, like in casually or like communication like our sitting face to face talking ...never, and teachers doesn't have time to talk to you and when he or she can talk to you get in trouble with the .....or majors or something like.

R So would a foundation year, like you had in China, would that year help? Students either did it in China or in Australia?

A Yeah, I for my experience I think it help a lot for me because I never had a experience of ...we do accounting, IT, something, ah, even the maths, through the English course, I never had an experience of them. And I feel like it's really necessary to do it because when I came to here is like if I don't do the language course I'm going to go straight away to the university I can't catch them, especially like Macquarie University, this ones from my boyfriend's experience, cause he came to here straight away go to the university course and the lecturers always have huge big lectures, like hundreds students and the tutorials, he can't really catch what they are talking about and what that is, even like accounting, what is accounting, he can't catch it because the way the lecturer doing the lecture the way the lecturer lecture you is like you are university student you will be able to understanding what I am saying, but for the overseas student they just start to study English is a second language for them, is kind of different their level is only high school or maybe middle level English speaking so their understanding of English words and the way they lecture is going to be different .. all lower than the how to stay the first .....

R So do you think maybe they should have to do another IELTS test to bring it up to a 6 or a 6.5 before they start university?

A Yeah, I think I think it's necessary to do some language course because they give you some tutorials regarding how to do the assignments, how to do the essays, how do the essays look in Australia, is totally different from China, and how does the accounting and business business course, look like. Give you the basic kind of how you say concepts for you. What are you going to study and what are you going to do later on. And the test, the the language test, they misunderstanding that. The way they study and the things they focus on is exams, yeah, so it's kinda different, so I can't really say do the language test is really helpful but I think give them some course before the university like foundation like we did before it really help. I think like from my experience, from now, like I writings of the essays and the other assignments and the concepts of those ones are from that time and I when you gotta basic idea to do something and when you do more practice, you get better, better, better, that's my experience to do that. I think it's really helpful to go straight ..better to go straight away to the university. Cos a lot of my friends they gotta higher IELTS mark than me but they don't really do well in university. is just because before the IELTS test marks just before they re studying the IELTS exam very well. Is not really testing their language – their real language ability of their.....

R It's a bit artificial?

A Yeah, it's so difference because a lot of students got a 6 or 7 when they can, and they say to me like going to psychology or science student they can't give some memorise or something and they just of the exam topics, they just memorise everything and once they exam come, 'oh I'm lucky yeah I saw this topic and I got high exam', that's the way they do it.

R It's a very Chinese way still?

A Yeah, and it's so crazy. I can't do that way. I never do well in Chinese education and that study, it's too much, you can't memorise. Also, the memorise does nothing for you – nothing.

R It doesn't help your analysis?

A Yeah, doesn't does nothing, it's like you memorise this topic and the right answer is you don't know why, just why. I can't', I never do.

R Just two more questions and then we'll stop. Why did you want a degree from an Australian University?

A Australian university? I think the first thing is like, I can't as I say before I can't really feel the Chinese style education when that time I think I was in year three of high school I got a really pressures like every day I am upset with my study I like I can't afford anything, I can't stay in that environment, so I start to talk to my boy ... laughs...no my parents and say like, I want to try some something else I was going to study like arts or something like that and my parents counselled me, 'do you want to try overseas'. Like this is the first time I thinking about that, I said 'of course I want to try and I want to go out to have a look at the other part of the world, that's it exactly' and choose Australia is because first of all my parents considering the society in here, is like Australia is much more multi culture society, is the discrimination some sort of thing they consider very lower than the others. Actually that is for the experience, Australians are better than others, and also we gotta like got to like how to say, we got an opportunity with the foundation before, it recommends us to to go Australia for studying and the idea just come through that.

R And was it a good decision?

A Yeah, I think it good for me. And I think and also is difficult for me.

R And will you apply for permanent residence when you've done your next IELTS test?

A When?

R Do you want to apply for permanent residence?

A Yes, I want to try if I can. If I can't I don't really want to spend too much time to do this sort of thing. And I want to try to do that. Like at the end of this year or if I couldn't at the end of this year I will do after my master, I will try to do it.

R Do you see yourself making a life for yourself here in Australia?

A Mmmm I really want, actually I got a plan. Like I want to open some business after my study here, I want to because for me, I think China is really big resource for me, everything international trading is really like have a bright side to it I think and right now I still doing some searching which sort of exactly which sort of business I am planning to do later. The study of the hospitality a lot of help for me to operation business, that's why I'm still thinking and I probably will go back to china to have a look at sort of resources...yeah.

R Okay....

First interview with Penny. Tape 19

R: I'll just ask you first – your Chinese name, your date of birth, and where you were born.

P: OK My Chinese name is .....Xiao. My date of birth is 14 February 1987. I was born in China – Shandong Province.

R: Shandong. OK. We're going to start off in this interview talking about your academic background and looking at what it was like starting and being educated in China, and then we'll talk about your study here. Then we'll stop the tape and our second interview will be more about your social life rather than your academic life. OK?

P: OK

R: OK? So let's talk first of all about your study in China. You went first of all to kindergarten, primary school, how did your education start?

P: In China I just finish my high school in year 12 similar I just OZee I got to foundation year in OZee. Then I come to Oz.

R: OK so you did three years of junior school, three years of high school, in China.

P: Yes, three years high school.

R: What was that like? Three years. How many subjects did you study?

P Totally, mine subject is nine but not include the sports, music, that not include but in the first year I have nine subjects but in the second year we can choose the six subjects.

R: OK what did you choose?

P; Psychology, ...and biology. And Chinese mathematic and English,

R: When did you first start learning English?

P: In primary school.

R: What was it like? Just a few words?

P: Yeah, just ABCDEFG and few words like apple, banana,

R: A little bit of vocabulary?

P: Yeah.

R: What was it like studying in your high school? What was a typical day like? What time did you start school?

P What...?

R What time in the morning?

P: Oh,

R: About?

P: I have two school in my high school. In the first half I start 7.30 am, but in another high school its' very purpose, so very student work very hard so maybe six.

R And when did you finish?

P Night.

R: Night? You must have been very tired.

P Yeah. Mmmmm.

R: And what were the classes like? How many students were in your class? Let's just look at your final year of high school. How many students in the class?

P Maybe sixty.

R And how many teachers did you have.

P Each subject have one teacher.

R: OK, and what would a classes like. Was there a lot of talking in the classes, or discussion?

P No, just my teacher to speaking and teaching , students do the notes and no any discussing.

R What happened if you want to ask a question?

P You can put your hand up maybe after the class.

R But not in the class?

P In the class it's okay but not normally in class so that maybe very shy so after class they will ask.
R: So in a class of sixty, what was the focus of the class. One of the interviewees said it was a lot of exam preparation.
P No, just students putting...how to see...just teacher just saying somme theory about the question, no ...some practical question, just some theory and question to guess te solution. Not like in .....you have the lecture and tutorial just one class.
R So was there a lot of preparing students so they could pass exams?
P Yeah
R Was that what it was like?
P Yeah, many exam paper you had to do ...you can get some key points
R Was it hard to get into university in China
P Yeah, very hard
R Of a class of sixty, how many would go into a university?
P Depends on not very..not very necessary proportion just depends on your study level. Because in china you lack Australia only promise have different exam paper so maybe in example Beijing university Shandong Province can get 10 students into, but another may be 9, 30 , depends on what your score. It's very high; maybe you can do the high school. If you low it just like the diploma school, yeah.
R: But very competitive? Alright, so it must have been quite different for you when you first came into your foundation year in Lang Fang.
P In the first year, in the first semester I think very easy for the in my high school because you have more time more free but in China all the time in your school to study because many study you must study otherwise you cannot enter the university.
R OK did you ever feel that sometimes your teachers were not...or you wanted to contribute or ask for more information ...did you ever feel frustrated with that Chinese system?
P I don't know. In china just study ... I just study ...no any working experience, just study, maybe in one week .....to study so we can use many homework to do so in china parents cannot ask you to work, just study. Study is very very important for you. Chinese students yeah.
R So let's talk about English...what was the focus on English. You started learning in primary school but as you went into high school, how was English taught in your school.
P Just ah, one lesson like one story, you just need to know the vocabulary the grammar, yeah, just focus on this.
R Any spoken English?
P No, just maybe just to reading the story, not like we interview now
R Just reading out loud?
P Yeah
R Looking back now, do you think your Chinese teacher, you had a Chinese English teacher, how do you think her English was, her pronunciation was it good, not so good?
P Mmmm I think not so very good, just like completed at the university in china and to do the teacher and you in one lesson just ten sentences, just speak and read. Loudly so not very so I think not good.
R What do you think is a better way of teaching English?
P Speak
R: Speak?
P When you speak you can use many words. You ...if there not enough vocabulary you cannot express very clearly but if you do just do the reading some words I can know, I can get meaning, but when I speak I forgot that.
R So lots of practice and speaking in conversation is good for language?
P Yeah
R When did you do your first IELTS test?
P The second semester in LangFang.

R: And what was your score?
P Five
R In all four?
P Just writing is just speaking is 4 others is five.
R and how man IELTS tests have you done
P four or five
R and what's your latest score
P what's you mean?
R when did you do your last IELTS?
P three years ago
R and what was your score then?
P five point five
R five point five in all?
P one is six, one is five
R So when you came to Australia to study, did you go straight into university? Or did you have to do a language course?
P Five weeks language course
R Just five weeks. So you came here with 5.5
P Just a diploma
R Where did you do that?
P SIBT
R And you did five weeks there and then into your degree?
P Yes
R and what's your degree?
P Diploma of commerce
R And where are studying that?

P SIBT.
R You finished the Diploma of Commerce?
P I go to Macquarie
R And what are you studying in Macquarie
P Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting.
R And when did you enrol in Macquarie?
P Two ...
R And how long do you have to go?
P One year in SIBT and two year in Macquarie
R So you did one year in SIBT and two years in Macquarie. When will you graduate?
P In July (2010)
R OK great. Did you do another ielts test after you'd done your language course?
P No
R Did you think you should have? Do you think the university should make you do another ielts test before they take you in.
P Because this five weeks language just directly lesson (?) finished you can pass this five weeks language you can do your course.
R OK so you went into SIBT and is that associated with Macquarie University?
P Yah
R Why didn't you go straight into your bachelor degree?
P Depends on your GPA
P So not IELTS test, just if you finish your .....you can to go into SIBT and into Macquarie
R So you couldn't go straight into you language school straight to Macquarie
P I think I have one course in language course in SIBT if you pass this course then this s fine.
So no anything

R But what I am saying is you did your language course. Did you do that in SIBT?
P Yeah.
R And then you did a diploma in SIBT.
P mmmm...
R Why didn't you go from the language course straight into Macquarie? Why did you do the diploma?
P If I go to Macquarie I need to IELTS test 6.5. I need to continue maybe 30 weeks.
R so it was better to do the diploma? And it was better to do the diploma subjects?
P Yeah.
R Do you remember how much credit?
P Two or three, I forgot.
R Two or three subjects?
P Yeah.
R: What's been the most difficult part for you, learning English? What do you find hardest?
P. Mmmm.....speaking. I think the .... I feel the confidence is very important, if you have more confidence, you can speak, if you some idea you can quick, but if not very confidence you very shy, it's cannot. Even though you have enough vocabulary.
R I agree. A lot of university courses require a minimum IELTS 6, do you think that's high enough.
P Not very high I think if you want to pass the exam in your university you need that score. For example some people in SIBT to study the diploma is very easy but you go to Macquarie it's very difficult so the language is very important for china students.
R: Is there a better way do you think of assessing whether a Chinese student is ready for university, apart from the IELTS score?
P I don't in China you very difficult to improve your English, you cannot not speak, you just do the paperwork, not enough. Maybe you can come oversea to get some general English course, that's more better than studying china but fees is very high.
R Yes it is extremely high. Some of the students I've spoken to said they chose accounting because it gave them a better chance for permanent residence, but also because they wouldn't have to write as many papers. Was that a consideration for you?
P No I don't think so.
R: Why did you choose accounting?
P Because my family is a business family so if I need to major my father company I need some information from the business however accounting is very basic information so no very difficult knowledge so I need that and from I am very the number is very confidence for that so I choose that course.
R /Some of the students I've spoken to have told me they struggle at university and sometimes they know of people to write their papers for them or do their online exams. Something like that. Do you know something like that happens at university?
P wrong exam?
R No, some student might ask someone else to write an assignment for them. Have you heard of that happening at Macquarie University?
P Yeah.
R Does it happen often?
P I don't know but I see some people use another people to write their assignment yeah.
R And one of the other students told me if they have online tests at Macquarie university and students ask someone else to do their online tests. You're aware of that?
P Yeah
R Does it happen much do you think?
P I don't know, but I think if you want to pass you need to do that because some Macquarie students think the Macquarie course is very difficult but I think it's easy not to work hard for this course if they use someone to help them to write the homework cannot pass.
R. No. Have you ever asked anyone to help you with your academic work?

P No....
R No? Not at all? What about something like just talking over the paper with one of your friends? That's okay?
P Yeah, if I write some assignment I need to discuss with my friends so any idea I need to write I discuss ....need to write.
R Yeah. That's reasonable we all do that. One of the other things that students have told me and I know from my teaching is that sometimes when students all students are in trouble with their academic work they try to put off their exams, they go to a doctor, get a medical certificate, try to defer their exams. Are you aware of that happening?
P Yeah
R Have you ever done that?
P No....
R Why not?
P No need. I think if I do supplementary test it more harder. Laughs...why I choose a harder one.
R But you know that some students do do it?
P Yeah some students really need to do the course .....but some student I have one friend he forgot exam time. So one thing just mid course can help her to finish the course.
R That's reasonable
P Yeah and I think sometimes in Macquarie the exam time is very close sometimes cannot prepare exam so one might do that so ...
R So postpone it for a little while?
P Yeah
R Just looking at the structure of your degree and Macquarie, do you get much help from Macquarie? R
R Do you know you can go to Macquarie and get help with language or some tutoring or anything like that?
P You mean to help me improve my English
R Mmmmmm
P Yeah, of course.
R Do you use that?
P No.
R Why is that?
P Oh laughs....I don't know .... laughs...I'm very lazy. I'm lazy girl.
R & P Laugh
R Maybe it's just a matter of time.
P Yeah, if I finish my tutorial I come back home my home, I can not remember how is free lesson to use. I forgot that.
R Yeah
R Tell me about your classes here at Macquarie. Is it very different from China, the way you are taught here?

P I don't know in Chinese University so I
R Your experience though in high school. Is it different from your experience in high shool?
P It's very difficult..corrects..different but in China high school and uni are also different so I don't know.
R So what do you usually do at Macquarie? Do you have tutorials, lectures, presentations?
P Yeah, yeah, tutorials, lectures, quiz, mmm...assignment in ... what anything. We also also – presentation and exam but in Macquarie if you find exam is not pass no matter, what marks in before you fail.
R i see, you've got to pass that final exam as well as the rest?
P Yeah

R OK have you ever failed an exam or have you ever failed a subject?
P Me?
R Yeah
P Yeah
R How many
P Just one
R Just one?
P Yeah
R What was that subject?
P ....law
R Oh God ...laughs
And have you sat ?
P Before I come back China in 20?? I think I can get complete my degree but when I come back I see my final results...oh my god! I failed (laughs)
R Oh no. Was it just the final exam
P Yep
R Oh dear
P Because I don't think I can failed this exam I think my final exam is very good so I come back I don't know why
R Did you ask to have the exam reviewed
P Because I have come back China so I cannot.
I asked S. to help me but my teacher decided no because she is not law student she cannot. So ok I repeat that
R Oh so just one subject
P Yeah, just one subject
R Gosh. Just tell me why did you want a degree from an Australian university? Why did you come here to study?
P Mmmm. I want to know another life different from China. And because my China my mmm....family .....how to .....that.
R Your final exam?
P In high school. You can go university. That score you can go bad university....that score is not very good.
So I choose to come overseas. Maybe I can get better school than in China.
R OK so when you think back on your experience studying here, was it a good decision?
P From the knowledge side, I think it's good decision but from the life I think China is better.
R Alright, we'll talk about that next in the next interview, but just tell, are you going to apply for permanent residence?
P I want...but I cannot.
R Why is that?
P From the first of July the new skill assessment will be approved so I am not sure I can get that or not.
R What do you need? Sevens in each subject?
P Yeah
R You can get that.
P IELTS is a very difficult course for me.
R I think you can do it.
P Really?
R Oh yes, I certainly do. A little more confidence I am sure you can. You will have a degree . I am sure you can do that.
P But I think IELTS has is not very focussed on sometimes if you use language is high level you can get seven but sometimes you need some lucky because full seven is not totally seven. You know.

R I know. Yes I think you do need some luck but I think it's in your reach. So if you got permanent residence would you live here or go back to China?
P My boss ask me today, you want to stay or come back. I told her if I get some .....from Australia and she want to stay in here maybe I will stay. If after three years I cannot find a suitable person and marry him I will come back, otherwise I will stay in Australia by myself but very lonely I need to come back.
R Go back to China you mean?
P Yeah,

Transcript interview James 24 February 2010 (9/21)

R: James I want to talk to you first of all about what it was like going to school in China. What are some of your thoughts about going to school and your early education?

J: Well in the earlier of my education in China we really have to learn lots of subjects across all the perspective ; Mathematics, Language, History, Geography, Arts, Communication, Physics, everything and there were pretty much...it's not much like career orientated or focussed. It was more like exam focus and also the entire education system gives me the feeling of they really trying to tell you how to be a good person sometimes. You know? What the is kind of like face of the Chinese background culture they try to tell you how can you really benefit the society take care of other people. But most of time we feel like we have lots of work to do we really have to focus on our exam, you know, to go to a better university or better school something like that.

R: So that very strong exam focus ...what about the focus on learning and maybe thinking yourself about how to study and learn.

J: Well, it I couldn't say they didn't ...ah, they are trained to encourage ourself to solve the problem by ourself. They try to ask ourself to think about something like that but you know, based on the structure of the education system we couldn't really pay much attention on that part. It was really strongly exam focussed.

R: What do you mean the structure: Do you mean because of class sizes?
J: Yes, the class size, and also the exam structure. You know after your five years of your primary school you have to take a exam so to actually go into your junior high, but which junior high school you can go to depends on your grade so because the ranking of the school so they require a higher grade so you pretty much have to study. Your teacher will actually tell you ...they will kind of guess what type of question will be on the exam paper so you will prepare for that

R: So a lot of exam preparation...and that's all the whole way through?

J: Yes, exactly. Not much for the first three years at the time of my studying but it's pretty much focussed on the last two years of your primary school so you just need to practise a lot and do lots of homework ...and the interesting thing is we actually finish our first and fifth all the teaching material would be in the first year and the entire fifth year would just review all the course for that year and so we can prepare for the exam.

R: So that's in the in the primary school?

J: in the primary school...and in the junior high and high school pretty much the same. In the first two years you study the entire teaching material in the three years in the last year you just pretty much review so the high school was even more serious because you have actually to take the biggest test, the graduation....high school graduation test so you can actually go to university.

R: So in your high school, in your senior high school, how many years...three years in junior school and three years in high school and then university if you were lucky and you did well.

J: Yes that's right

R: Did you ever feel frustrated with that sort of system or is that just what you were used to?

J: Yes a little bit because I am not that interested in study as hard as other students so my grade was a little bit low. And you know the school's outcome depends on the outcome of your students' grade so teacher will pay more attention on the student who actually learns well and got better grades so they didn't really .... usually they cut the class in half and half and pretty much the second half students didn't get a lot of attention from the teacher or any help at all probably so it really depends on ourselves you know if we really want to learn we can put more effort and the teacher .... can help us but you know we got lots of students within one classroom....

R: How many?
J: I got 80 students in my high school ...
R: eight zero?
J: Yes
R: In one class? With one teacher?
J: Yes that's a typical one
R: Whoa...
J: One teacher for each subject but
R: So eighty students in every class
J Yes that's right
R: So you wouldn't get a lot of opportunity to ask questions ..or...
J Not really because the question we can ask is which question you don't know how to answer is still exam based so we have to do lots of exam paper and find your question . They didn't really answer ...how can I put this into words ...you know they didn't really tell you which part of the material you didn't understand ... they ask you which question you don't understand. They answer you step by step.
R Yeah, ok. In one class with 80 students, that's a lot of responsibility for one teacher.
J Yeah because the entire education system in China is like that . We got too many students and less teaching resource and also because the final outcome depends on your grade so you have to really compete really hard.
R: Do you think like in a system like our system for example where you have a maximum class size of 25, is that going to be better for the students?
J: Well it's always because if student can probably get equal attention from your teacher then they're probably going to help you a lot. More face to face communication something like that but it doesn't seem that practical in China because we don't have that many teachers.
R: OK so you did lots of subjects – Maths, Communications, Language. When did you first start learning English?
J: The first time I came across English was in my freshman year of Junior High
R: So you'd done your five years of primary so it was your first year ....Allright, yeah
J: So the attitude at the moment student will come across English at their first year of Primary but .....
R: So what was your English teacher like?
J: She's Chinese English teacher and she just did three years of higher education of English study so she went back to high school and teach us.
R: So thinking back on it was her English good ,..good enough to teach?
J: In China, it English doesn't concern us what as what we doing here because we didn't have to speak much English ...we didn't really use as a communication tool. We only focus on our spelling, grammar. This is the two biggest area.
R: Spelling, grammar?
J: Yes, and our teacher was always pretty good with grammar but now think back her pronunciation probably not that great.
R: Because she'd been taught by other non-English...non-native speakers

J: Sometimes this is a problem but as I said the entire education system was built up on the exams so you couldn't really test millions of students to interview them to test their speaking skills or something so you can only put on the paper and test their grammar.
R: OK yeah, grammar and some vocabulary? So you started in your first year of junior school...when did you do your first IELTS test?
J: That was seven years later after my graduation from high school...senior high.
R: Right...any why did you do an IELTS test then?
J: I want to study in Australia so because education requirement I have to take IELTS before I actually got the offer from Australian university.
R: So that's was before you came to study at OG...you did the IELTS test then?
J: Yes
R: And what were your results in WRITING, READING, SPEAKING AND LISTENING. Do you remember?
J: I couldn't remember exactly but I think I got overall 4.5
R: Alright, so about 4.5
J: Yes
R: Do you remember how many tests you've done since then?
J: Ah, I did two IELTS tests before I came to Australia and three IELTS exam after I finish my undergraduate degree.
R: After you finished ...you've done three?
J: Yeah
R: And your last one was 8.5 for
J: 8.5 for Listening, 7.5 for reading, 7 for speaking , 6.5 for writing.
R: Writing, ok. Alright. First of all, did you go straight into your undergraduate degree when you came from China?
J: No, I spent one year at prerequisite courses ...it was held by Queensland Government to help Chinese students to transit into the higher education system in Australia.
R. OK where did you do that?
J: At LangFang
R: And then you came from LangFang straight to your degree program?
J: No, actually I have to take another 10 weeks of language course because my IELTS doesn't meet their requirement.
R: OK 10 weeks at QIBT?
J: No, at Griffith Uni.
R: So that was just at Griffith or at the Queensland Institute of Business.
J: No Griffith.
R: OK...do you remember what your IELTS score was before you did that 10 week course?
J: 5.5 overall....
R: And you needed to get it up to 6? Well, what undergraduate degree did you take?
J: Bachelor of Commerce majored in Accounting, minor in Economics.
R: OK why did you choose that degree?
J: Well, I thought to be honest because the first time I think about the degree I was thinking about staying in Australia so I have to check their immigration requirements so I decided because accounting was listed under the critical skill I got extra points so I decided to do accounting subject and also I was quite interested...I was always interested on the business area so I decided to do it anyway.
R: OK...many students choose accounting because they feel they won't have to write a lot of assignments. Was that a consideration for you?

J: Yes, before I decide to do accounting I didn't really know about all the assessment for that subject but actually I went to Uni to study there I feel really lucky because my poor writing skills...I don't have to write .. well, three years of my undergraduate study I only write two assignments so it was a considerable factor for us to study that.

R: Do you think a lot of Chinese students choose Accounting knowing they don't have to write a lot of assignments.
J: Yes, quite a lot of my fellow students decide to do accounting because of that . Quite a number of students actually change their degree into accounting because they fear to write assignments.

R: OK so what sort of assessment do you do with your accounting degree?

J: Most of the time we only have to do our exam like multiple choice or short answer but also sometimes we do have assignments ...but not research focussed it was more like a case study or .....analysis.
R: So the language skills perhaps were perhaps not as important; it was the content that was more important?
J: Yeah, our understanding was more important.
R: For you, what's been the most difficult aspect of learning English...which part of learning a second language have you struggled with?
J: I think for me ah, you understand Chinese education system was based on exam focus but I didn't really pay that much attention on English so I didn't learn very hard at the earlier stage so I think I was a little bit struggle when I came across to learn. I think probably because focus so the speaking and communication part was the biggest challenge because we didn't really use them on a daily basis.
R: And Australian English can be quite informal. And maybe use a lot of ordinary, common language...slang we would call it. Has that been an issue for you?
J: Not really because it's a little bit sad because most international students have their own cycle...not cycle, society ... they didn't really communicate with other local student or lot so what we say or what we speak is pretty much within the Uni life.
R: so it's quite a formal language?
J: Yeah.
R: Most university courses require a minimum IELTS 6. Do you think that's high enough?
J: Well, 6 IELTS 6 is I think is just is just enough for them for them to actually sit in the lecture room to understand what the teacher is talking about. But if you really want to put a student into a fit into the society you need at least a 7 I believe but it is considerably a little bit higher than what they can actually do when they go to Uni. Actually Griffith changes the structure . All of the international students even if they have an IELTS 6. they still have to do a language course a compulsory language course at the moment.
R: That's a new requirement...that's good. Do you think there are other way, better ways of assessing whether an international student is ready for study in Australia, rather than just an IELTS?

J: Ah.....If it's practical you can actually have a one on one interview so just to get better to know better about the students, whether they really want to study the subjects...whether they are interested on them or not, but sometimes you know it's not easy to put such assessment into place...because lots of these things are quite subjective so you couldn't really quantify them....it's hard to .....
R: So the IELTS is really the only test?
J: Yeah, they got other forms of testing but it's basically another test ....ah, not really much, you know.

R: What do your Chinese friends say about studying in Australia. Do they have lots of difficulties?

J Ah.....what I can say is study in Australia wasn't that hard as we imagined it you know. Even we study as a second language because the study load or work load was not that heavy . We only have to do 4 subjects a semester, that's like 12 hours a week for compulsory, so if you

really paid attention and attend all your lectures and tutorial and do your homework afterward, you didn't even have to put any extra hours you can get a pass I think so it wasn't that hard so some student because it's not hard they didn't really pay that much attention and they didn't work very hard so sometimes they fail because of that.

R" Do you think it's too easy?

J: Ah, I think it's ...the only university I study was Griffith so I consider it was a little bit too easy because before the exam take place most of the lecturer will tell you what.....not exactly what kind of question are going to be on the exam paper but they will highlight all the important things for you.

R: Alright, so they give you a lot of guidance?

J: Yeah

R: Do you think that's to do with the amount of money that comes from international students and not wanting students to fail?

J: well to be fair it has to be something to do with that. Griffith has got like 60% of international students so that can be a factor for them. I think they still have to remind their own reputation as a university otherwise student wouldn't come anyway. They try to keep the balance I believe..

R: I know that that some international students – at Macquarie for example – there's been a big issue that when some international students can't face the assessment sometimes they defer...they ask for the assessment to be deferred. Is that something you're familiar with?

J: Yes, from my own experience I never do any deferred exam because our lecturer always said defer is not that easy but I do have lots of students trying to get defer exam from all the means by necessary. It was really quite impressive sometimes they put all the energy on trying to get defer exam rather than just study for them, you know. I got student who lots of my friends try to fake it to get doctor notes. Actually I heard this from one of the local one of the Aussie students trying to get deferred exam, she actually ate a raw potato to vomit in the exam so they can actually ask her to leave they said don't worry we'll just give you a deferred exam you can have a rest at the moment. It's just unbelievable the way they try to get a defer.

R: So you see that a lot in your Chinese friends – they try

J: Yeah, especially when they have a little bit harder course so they try to do the hardest one two months later so they have more time to review them but to be honest they didn't really review that much within that two month period.

R: So they do they do their normal exams but if they have a hard subject they try to push that out a bit?

J: Yeah

R: I know that a lot of students they ask other people to help them. To either do assignments for them or to help them if they have take home work. Do you have any experience of that?

J: Yes, sometimes as I said before most of the international students they form their own society so just out of courtesy sometimes it is hard to say no when someone ask you to help them to do their assessment. Ah, sometimes the student the next student ask you what they don't know – they want you to teach them – to help them. That's okay for us, we're keen to help other people but sometimes they really they just ask you in private I want your assignment so that I can copy it so they didn't really get the idea of academic plagiarism or how serious an issue it is in Australia.

R: Have you been asked to give students assignments?

J: Yes, a couple of times.

R: What did you do?

J: Well, I didn't really give them, I just said if you want my help you can ask me what you don't know I can help you with that but I couldn't really give you all my assignments because I don't want academic fail.
R: No, but you know that it happens?
J: Yes, and it just impress me a lot how do they get assignments you know . The other thing the university really have to improve to change their assessment more frequently.....and I don't actually got the assessment for one or two years for them and they still the same the assessment so they can actually use (21min. 30 sec)
R: OK, that's a failing on behalf of the university.
J: Yes, and also for the exam papers the same thing. I don't know how do they get information like that they just say they got a big data base and they pretty much random draw the questions from them so the question was pretty much the similar for the whole year . Probably within one year the first semester was different with the second semester but next year it will be the same.
R: I also have one of my students, he has a group of what he calls his ABCs, his Australian Born Chinese friends and they help him a lot with his writing when he has to do assignments. Is that something that you think is common – that people in this situation, these aren't other students, these are people actually in a church group who help this student.

J: For that thing, Griffith uni actually got the English help group from the teaching staff so it's not that much a big issue for international students. You can actually just make an appointment with the teacher and they can look after your assignment or correct your grammar or something like that. So if you can get other students to help you to do it that would be great I think.
R: But getting someone outside the university to work on your assignment? Is that fair, do you think?
J: Ah, it depends how you define help, you know. If you just got a problem like you don't know how to express your opinion or something or you ask them to correct your grammar or check your paper that would be alright but if you ask other people actually DO your assignment, that would be like plagiarism in a different form.
R: And, this notion of getting an academic writer to correct your grammar and what have you, how far should that go when you think that you're also being tested for your competence in a language?

J: This is a difficult ... I actually didn't think about that. Ah...actually could be an issue because the assessment would be to assess your ability to communicate to actually express your own idea so if you constantly got help from academic writers to correct your papers it doesn't ... it didn't actually highly motivated student to put more attention on this stuff you know?
R: Yeah, because one of the criticisms at the moment and one of the changes to the accounting occupation in demand list is that it's been found that a lot of students are passing through their exams but they still don't have the English skills to get jobs.
J: Yeah, that thing actually happened to me. I graduated with a higher GPA for my accounting subject but when I actually go to apply for a job I actually went to the interview stage the interviewer actually told me my English wasn't that good now for our communication and also the big four accounting firms .....international students they actually got their own IELTS requirement which was pretty high so 8.5 across all subjects so that can be an issue ...ah but you know academic study is not always about language, it's about understanding about the subject so it can be an issue but it still depends on the student itself their own attitude. If they want to be an accountant you work hard on your language.
R: So you say there are a lot of resources at place at your university to help international students?
J: Yes, exactly. Griffith was an international student focussed university I think and we got English help program and also we have I think free English section to help us to improve our language and also we have library section to help us to do research and how to write an

argument or something like that. It was really helpful when we actually transit from the non-academic study into higher education study.
R: OK that's good. Let's just look at the structure of your undergraduate degree. How are classes delivered?
J: It was undergraduate based on course work so you the first year you have to study x subjects what they call core subjects all the commerce school. That was give you a basic idea of how the business structure was work from accounting to economics to corporate finance, just give you an overall idea of how the .....work, and after that from the second year you have to do your course that was more related to your discipline. If you majored in accounting you have to do corporate accounting, company accounting, stuff like that. And you also have a choice of doing a minor or electives that was purely based on your own interesting kind of stuff you want to do.
R: Ok and lectures and tutorials?
J: The typical structure was two hours lecture a week for each subject and one tutorial afterwards for the lecture. Ah, the lecture was quite new for international students because it was delivered in a large number of class, they have usually typical 200 students in a classroom and the tutorial was more like a small classroom, around 20 students per room so you can actually discuss the issues and questions with your tutor so it helps a lot.
R: Do you find international students participate in that discussion?
J: Not much
R: Why is that?
J: Sometimes at least that's what I feel, I feel a little bit embarrassed actually speaking English because I didn't pronounce well and sometimes I feel got a little bit of trouble when I want to express my opinion correctly and sometimes just feels like waste of time.
R: Waste of time?
J: Waste of time with most of time what you don't know other people also don't know so they will ask the question anyway.
R: so you rely on someone else maybe or a domestic student to ask?
J: Yes. What I think the issue is ah, is most of the reason we don't participate much is our language skills . So sometimes students really encourage international students to talk. Sometimes we got our tutor put our into group discussion and random select team leader to speak up.
R: And how does that work?
J. Well, it helps a lot in a way you can actually discuss your knowledge with Aussie student or local student of course it helps a lot just brainstorming and sometimes student didn't tend to appreciate it much but afterwards they say other teachers were awful they asked us to answer the question sometimes but it was nice ....if you really want to learn something you really need to participate. That helps a lot.
R: Do you find the domestic students, the Australian students, are quite tolerant; are they quite encouraging or do they tend to push the international students away?
J: Ah, to be fair they also have their own .....society they are more .....to their background because they talk the same and they ah, most of the people who study accounting comes from an international background and so it doesn't big issue for me per se
R: So you don't feel excluded?
J: No, no.
R: Do you think too that the difficulty in participating in tutorials sometimes is because it's so different from the way you were taught in your first 10 years of schooling. Does that have an effect?

J: Yes, it will have probably first semester but afterwards what I did is not that much of an issue I think.
R: In lectures....200 people all listening to one teacher, looking at overheads, power points. Do you follow it all?

J. International are going to probably find it a little bit of a struggle at the beginning of their study in Australian but I think as time pass by we all tend to adopt into the other structure and form so not that much of an issue I think if you really concentrate on what the teacher is saying.
R: Two hours of listening though? That's a lot of concentration.
J: Yes, that's why they got a ten minutes break at the lecture (laughs) but as I said it is always back to the students' attitude. If you really want to concentrate you will sit in the first row and the first row is never full.
R: So, ok, you're all in the first two, struggling, listening. What happens if you don't understand it all?
J: Um, look you can always ask the lecturer to repeat that and the lecturer will always keen to help. They always say if you don't understand what I say just raise your hand and they are aware there are a lot of international students out there so they say if I'm going too fast raise your hand to tell me to slow it down or to explain in more detail and most of what we did is if we don't quite clearly get the concept we just highlight them and ask the lecturer afterwards.
R: OK and the lecturers are responsive?

J: Yes, they will explain in more details for us. They really help a lot.
R: Do you think though that they concentrate more on the content of their subject rather than help with the language? With your English?
J: I think their responsibility ... their ah, if we want to work on our language skills we have special people who can help us. We got the English help to help us to do that, but this was more content focussed.
R: I think we both know some students who've come down from China and really they're not very focussed on their study.
J: Yes, that is an issue. I've actually got two friends who were kicked out of the country because they were not attending enough course and sometimes they couldn't pass . I actually got a friend who failed four subjects in one semester and the university just terminated his study.
R: He's gone back to China?
J: Yeah
R: What was his problem? Why did he struggle?
J: He didn't attend any of the lecture, he didn't do any of the homework, and he just pretty much just played around at the casino.
R: So never going to get a degree?
J: Yeah, that's the thing. He pretty much wasted his entire three years here.
R: Sad, really.
J: Yeah, that's the thing for university higher education they didn't check the attendance that closely and even they do check they really didn't report with the immigration they just give you five per cent for participation so lots of the international students think five per cent is not that much and they didn't attend and they still think ...they still attend the first week of the semester and the last week of the semester because most time that's when the teacher will give you the hint for the exam so that's pretty much what they are going to do . Just spend the two years before the exam to study a lot but didn't really give them a grade. (around 34 mins...check).
R: So really there should be more control of students attending classes?

J: Actually at Griffith got something called amber risk assessment . If you are not attending the first five weeks of the tutorial you will get a letter from the university but it's still not much, you know, the people who went to higher education has ..... 20 years old ... should have their own control over their own life . If you still .....from outside it's not really good for their own career and stuff. They are not take responsibility for theirself or it's still back on to their own attitude to study.

R: But for those students who perhaps aren't quite to mature or responsible, should the university be doing more, considering g how much students pay to come here.
J: Yes, if they can do that, they would be great, you know. But what our parents paid us for is to come here to study . They don't want to waste our time and working activity so if the university can really control us to live in society and to study here that would be great, but just I really can't see any practical ways they can do that, you know.
R: Well we might think about that for next time. Let me just finally ask you, why did you want a degree from an Australian university. Why not England or the United States or New Zealand?

J: Ah, finance plays a bit deal in the decision was made. You know it costs me around 600 grand of Chinese dollars to study in Australia but it costs me twice as much if I want to study in England or the United States.
R: 600,000 RMB? For your three year degree?

J: Yes, and its going to cost twice as much if I want to study in England or America.
R: New Zealand?
J: No, it's probably because of the university rankings not much student want to go to New Zealand to study.
R: And permanent residence in Australia, is that also a ....
J: Yes, that's also a big factor why we want to study here. Lots of parents send their children out because they think after they graduate they will stay in Australia. Better environment, better working conditions, something like that.
R: Is that what you're aiming to do?
J: Ah, I wouldn't say I didn't consider that but for my own major was accounting was because I want to do a CPA and stay in Australia for another five years so permanent residence was a factor for me to think about studying in Australia.
R: And now all the rules have changed?
J: And that's why I decide to do another Masters degree?
R: And the Masters degree will take you closer to that?
J: Yes, give me actual points for that.
R: And eventually do you see yourself living in Australia or China?
J: Well, from what I plan at the moment I was thinking about living in Australia for another five years and doing my CPA and then probably go back to China because I don't think I can probably fit in to the society now. I am still struggling with my language so I didn't really think I can really build a good career if I stay in Australia. If I come back to China after I got my professional recognition ...if I come back to China my English skills will be an advantage for me but if I stay here it's probably going to be a disadvantage for me.
R: Time will tell.
J: Yes, fingers crossed.

Interview 1 with Student Daisy, Tape 14.

R: I want to start off by talking to you about what it was like going to school in China. So, tell me about your education, you went to kindergarten, primary school?

S: Ah, I don't think I go to kindergarten when I was young, and then primary school and secondary school and high school and when I went to high school I went to Ogee. The class in Lang Fang, you know that, the foundation program, and after that I went to Australia for my study...bachelor degree.
R: And tell me what it was like going to high school.
S: High school?
R: Yeah, talk about your high school experience.
S: Because in China you know, people need to study very very hard in high school because they want to enter into university but the university is very hard and it's fit for people who get great mark, yes, so I don't have any social life when I was in high school. All my time spent on study because I need to get good mark to enter into a *good* university. Because you know in China you must get bachelor degree or maybe master degree and then you can find a job that is difference with Australia.
R: Right, so you did three years of junior high then three years o f senior high school. So at what point did you start learning English?
S: You mean when?
R: Yes.
S: When I was in primary school.
R: Primary school?
S: Yes
R: And what subjects did you study in high school?
S: Subjects? English, Chinese, Mathematics, Physics, Chemist yeah, and what, politics, yeah,
and geography, and let me thought, history.
R: That's a lot of subjects ....did you study those all the way through or was that in junior high school and then fewer subjects in senior high school

S: All the way through.
R: All the way through? And what was your favourite subject?

S: Physics
R: Physics. What were your teachers like? Just describe as typical day, a usual day for me in your Chinese high school.
S: Every day in the morning I get up at six and have breakfast then I went to school, they have morning ... tea ....reading. it's about forty or hour you have to study by yourself and then they gave you about ten to fifteen minutes you can have breakfast or have a rest then that following by four class. Each class by about forty five minutes. Yes. Then it finish at about twelve o'clock and then we can go back to home to have our lunch then have a rest and about 2.30 then we go to school again and have two classes each one with 45 minutes and after that you can have one hour rest the school ask you to do some exercise during that time or you can study or whatever you like as long as you stay in school , yes, and after about 5 or 6 o'clock or five o'clock you have another class, is self study class, you have to study at school and mmm usually it called self study but the school does a teacher come to the school come to the class and teach students even though it's called self study time but it's also teachers' time. Yes, and about after 7.30 you can go back home and have how to say, diner, and it's normal day but if you are in the last year of high school when you need to enter into the university and you got another 2 hours self study started at 8 yeah 8 or 830 and two hours finished at 10 o'clock.
R: And what time do you start school?

S: You mean primary school?
R: No, high school. You get up at 6 o'clock you go in you have a reading class
S: Oh, you mean in the morning? Seven.
R: Seven, so what happens in that reading class? Is that English or Chinese?

S: Oh, sometimes because sometimes the .....English subject and the Chinese subject you need to memory something so it's just a chance because your teacher or some students; leader the just organise the class and you read together to help you to memory.
R: Alright, ok. That sounds a long day
S Yes it is.
R: You get very tired?
S" Yes and after that a lot of homework but for me I'm a naughty girl I don't like homework but you know my classmates someone who studied very hard they have to finish the work at the time 2 o'clock and you know sometimes in the final year every day they just sleep for four hours.
R: That's a very long day.
S: Yes, but you know the entrance to the university is really competitive.
R: Yes. How many students in an average class?
S: In my place, it would be fifty to sixty.
R: How many of those students would actually go on to university?
S: Actually because my class is really special and because when I enter into the high school they just pick up the top fifty from all the grade and our top fifty everywhere enter into the university but for other class maybe half, maybe even less than half.

R: Alright, so about half. OK so you first started...just before we start talking about English, I want to ask you, what was it like being in a class of 50 or 60 students. Do you remember?
S: laughter, yes I know it's a big class and I thought you might call .....that because people don't have much communication with each because it's all one to others just the teacher keep on talking talking talking talking and we just w2riting notes and listening to him we don't have time to discuss questions we don't have time to go to teachers some questions if we feel confused we just need to do is to remember and to learn what the teacher told us and then do exercise because our aim is to enter into the university and because I like physics and sometimes I ask my teacher some questions it's not include in the books and my teacher just told me you can read all you can do research don't have to me my aim is to teach you the knowledge in the book and then you can go to university that's it.
R: Did you find that frustrating?
S: Yes, I find I don't like the education that's why I come to Australia for the study because I don't like study like a machine and follow others I want to be creative and communication yeah no because if you don't communicate with others if you don't discuss what can you learn more about the question how can you know more about the fact? You know its how it works in China.
R- So it's a lot about memory and just remembering what you're told, no questioning?
S: Oh, you can ask but all question is about for example if you do mathematics questions all questions you can ask is about how you solve the problems you know I think it's more simple than if you just think more about the question like it's not critical thinking about.
R: No, no critical.....did you ever think perhaps your teachers were not right?
Did you ever think that perhaps your teachers were not correct that there might have been two different ways of thinking about things?
S" Yeah, yeah I think so but sometimes the teacher also thought the education is not good for students because it's just a teaching knowledge not creative it limit people their potential because you can't develop their potential or special talents but that's how China now Chinese education now, teachers even they think, they want to communicate with students, they don't have time, they have their task, their task is need to help students to enter

university that you can earn more money but not then they lost reputation, then they get less money.

R: So it must have been quite a different situation when you first went to the school in LangFang.
S: Yes, is quite different. I feel happy....laughter....you see you know me yeah, because when I am in class I can ask you what I want to know and every time even its not .....class sometimes its furthermore about the knowledge but you are patient to answer my question ..Yeah, that's what I appreciate for that.
R: laugh....that's good to know. Let's come back to teaching English and learning English. You started learning in primary school. When did you do your first IELTS test?
S: Oh, in Lang Fang I think. I can't remember but the first class...Unilearn level 2 I thought I'd do my first IELTS test.
R: Do you remember what your score was?
S: Six,
R: Six, and how many tests have you done?
S: Only one...you mean I do IELTS tests a few months ago in Sydney for immigration.
R: And what was your score?
S: Seven.
R: Seven in all four skills?
S: Laughter....ah, no. one 6.5.
R: Oh ...laughter .....
S: I don't know but maybe when I write down something I made some mistakes, I don't know.
R: And your first, it was six in all four?
S: Yeah.
R: OK and you've gone up to 7.
S: And I think my speaking is 7.5.
R: You're sure it is?
S: Sure
R: Sure it is, it's always been excellent.
So when you came to Australia you had an IELTS 6. Did you go straight into university?

S: Yes, but for three months English teaching.
R: Why did you do that?
S: Because Macquarie University, they requested 6.5 yes, and you know and I ....to come here earlier to learn English here rather than go out study at China because in here you have more chance to speak.
R: Yes, you do. OK so then you went to Macquarie University. Where did d you do your three months of English?
S: At Macquarie University
R: So you did three months in language then you went into your bachelor degree?
S: Yes.
R: And what was your bachelor degree?
S: Bachelor of Applied Finance.
R: and you started than when? Do you remember when?
S; February 2007.
R: And when did you graduate?
S: Last year, June.
R: June 2009.
OK so that's quite a short degree?
S" It's a 3 year study and because I do a summer course and get ....make it faster.
R: You're not doing any more study at the moment.
S: No, I just still got my...146, do you know that?

R: No....
S: 146 is about...it's a financial diploma but it's if you want get a job as financial planer you have to get, 146.
R: And where did you get that?
S: I do it on line
R: And who did you do that with?
S: I can't remember. It's ...a bank...I can't remember.
R: OK Maybe you can let me know.
S: Yes I can mail it to you.
R: I just want to talk to you about what it was like at university. One of the things many students not you but many students have told me they went into accounting, for example, because they didn't want to they thought that would mean they wouldn't have to write a lot of assignments. You're in a different degree of course, but do you think that's a consideration for some students, that they choose degree where they won't have to write.
S: Laughter....yes I know that because we have compulsory subjects and elective subjects and I know a lot of friends, classmates and they just choose mathematics and some subjects that don't require to write notes or essays like that, I know that, most people do that because they felt it is easier to get a good mark. Yes!
R: Why did you choose your degree?
S: Because I like finance, yes, and I when I was young when I enter into university I want to finance and I thought if some people whose working in finance department they can make a lot of money.....giggling....but now I realise if you do financial planner you can help people organise their money, it's really good. That is really good, finance is really good, and even though I don't maybe in the future because I may be starting my own business in the future if I don't do anything about finance the knowledge is also helpful and I can do some investment by myself and finance help people to organise money organise yeah, it's really good.
R: Just looking, because some of the questions aren't really applicable to you. So I'm just just talking for a moment, I'll come back to this in a moment, but just talking about how students organise their lives and their study at university. I know that a lot of students and they've told me this, use someone else to do their exams or if they have an online test they will get someone else to do it or get someone else to write a paper for them. Have you experienced that?
S: No never.
R: I don't mean you personally. I mean are you aware that it happens with some international students? I'm not talking about you.
S: I see because ah, I see some people who ask others to write their assignments for them, but not much.
R: Not too much?
S: No, in my degree, not too much.
R: Ok do you know are there any other things other students do when they are struggling to get through their degree? In terms of getting help – are you aware of any of those?
S: Yes I know, because while I study at university some people they don't understand the concept and because we are from China and happy to help them sometimes I explain the items and the concept to them sometimes just do the outline because it's a kind of ability some people they can't organise the concept they feel confused about everything but for me it's not hard so I have to help others to do that review before the exams and they passed the exam.
R: That's great before the exam. I suppose I'm talking about people who get someone to sit an exam for them or who get someone to do an online test or to write a paper. You don't have much experience of that with other students.
S: No I heard of someone hire you know because they ask someone else to write their assignments and they pay them yes I heard but not too much.
R: that's good. One of the other things I know other students do ...and I know this from my experience as a lecturer ... is that when students are struggling they will go to a doctor and they will get a medical certificate to put off doing their exam.

S: Giggling .... Yes I heard ...I never any friends of me don't have this situation. Yes, I heard that.
R: You do find that, sometimes I have a stack of medical certificates like that. Let's talk about IELTS just for a moment. So Macquarie wants an IELTS 6
S: 6.5
R: 6.5, but many students come in, they can come to Australia with a 5.5....
S: Phone interrupts....sorry
R: Some students come in with a 5.5 and then they do some language study and then they go straight into university so their language may not have improved much from the 5.5. Do you think that system needs to be reviewed?
S: I don't have any experience about that but I think it should be reviewed...but the problem is that if they can't go to Australia how can they study English because now English speaking country they can't really know what English is because why i went into Australia i can't speak English at all, you know at first, I'm afraid. It's not about your language skill it's about your heart ... your psychology so at the beginning I feel afraid to talk to people, I feel afraid they don't understand ME you know it's really hard so I'm really happy to come here earlier to do the language study because I thought I improved a lot. In the class I can speak English and after class I can speak English because it's English speaking country. So I think maybe it should be ....I don't know how because if they don't go to Australia they don't study English it's a totally different. You know knowing one thing and using English is totally different. Yes, the problem is not how to learn it, the problem is how you use it so maybe we should emphasise on how to use English.
R: Ok so just thinking back a minute to when you were learning English back in China, think about your English teacher there, think about the way English was taught. Was your English teacher pronunciation good, what was the focus?
S: They focus on grammar, grammar and vocabulary. It's actually you know as I told you before for Chinese education you need to memory a lot of thing, with grammar you need to memory it. The vocabulary you have to know how to spell and you have to remember it every day but the problems I said it's nothing when you can do it in paper but you can't use it in life. What's that mean? Nothing.
R: For those students who come with a 5.5, should they maybe stay in the language school college longer and then get tested before they go to university?
S: Yes, Yes I think so.
R: Do you think 6.5 is high enough?
S: I can't say it because you know the IELTS is only one way to test the ability to speak English and you can't just rely on ielts to determine if one person is good enough to enter into university. Some people they have not good at exams some people who are good at exams. It makes difference. So I don't know how to evaluate but maybe they need to have more much more variety exams to test the ability to speak English, not only ielts.
R: Mmm very good. Anything you can think of, that you can strongly recommend?
S: No....because I just know IELTs sometime you know....I don't like....
R: IELTS is only one test.
S: Yes, and the teacher also important. For example, for my university Macquarie university, people come with a 6 and after 6 months they got a three months English teaching in English class and after that you have to hand in assignments and also the teacher also see how you perform in the class and that determines whether you enter into the university. I think that's a good way.
R; Just thinking about your degree, how are the classes set up? Do you have lectures, tutorials?
S: yes yes
R: do you need to do presentations
S: Yes, most of the two main parts are lecture and tutorial and the presentation is in tutorial.
R: do you like doing that?

S: laughs….yes, why not?
R: Many students Chinese students don't because they don't have experience in doing it.
S: Yeah, everyone don't have experience. You know when you learn driving you don't have experience but you are learning for presentation same thing.
R: Umm. I think we're just about finished with this question. There are a couple of other things I just want to ask you. I just want to think more about why you came to Australia for education.
S: Yeah, as I told you before at the beginning I want to come to Australia because I hate Chinese education system. I don't want to just do knowledge just like a machine I want to be creative and I want to think critical and that's why I came to Australia and do my bachelor degree.
R: But why not America or Canada or the United Kingdom?
S: Oh you mean
R: Did you choose Australia because?
S: Yeah, because the Western education system like you said Australia, Canada, England is almost the same but why you want to know why I particular choose Australia.
R: Both, you explained why you chose a Western education. I understand that. But was there a particular reason that brought you to Australia?
S: Yes, because mmm my parents worried me because they know some countries they have some hot to say, discrimination, and Chinese people and my parents went to Australia before I went to Australia and they thought Australian people are nice
R: And there's not much discrimination?
S: Yes, and they thought I could have a better life in Australia because people are equal and you know if you go to a country and the people don't respect you, you will feel bad, but for Australia I felt lot of people are nice and they are really happy to help you when you are in trouble that's good, yeah, and they don't have too much discrimination (struggles with word) and the ethic normally equal.
R: And finally just let me ask you about your education. Did your degree live up to your hopes? Do you think you had a good education here?
S: Yes, I think so. But it's complicated because ...went to university and I studied and I it's quite useful but teachers not only teach the past you know, last year , 2008 the financial crisis happened all my studied about financial crisis and it's just update and its really helpful and compared to china they don't teach the recent.
R: Your teachers were teaching you as it were happening?
S: Yes, yes
R: As it was unfolding, they were teaching you about it.
S: Yes yes because the financial crisis every day you know some company they broke up and every day it happened big change in finance and during that time my teacher, you know the thing maybe just happened yesterday and they prepared it and the teacher has the next day and it's really helpful and it's why why I love it. Because I can learn the most updated knowledge. It's really useful for my further life – yes – and mmm....and the education here you have to go to tutorial class and you can have more communication with teachers and you can ask them questions and even sometimes the lecturer they have advising time or I can't remember how to say it because it's a particular time you can come and ask them questions.
R: so, consultation?
S: Year, consultation, and lecturer also do that so I can ask the tutor and also my lecturer in charge so I can learn a lot and sometimes I have some questions and they say, 'okay I will do the research for you and I will tell you next time.
R: that's really good
S: and helpful.
R: I'm finished, I'll just ask you one question, just to help me identify the interview, your date of birth and where you were born.
S: I was born in Baotao

R: In what province was that?
S: Inner Mongolia.
R: Yes, and your date of birth.
S: May of 5th, 1986.
R: 1986...and that's perfect, we've finished.
S: OK thank you
R: thank you.

Crystal: 2nd interview

R: We are going to talk now, today, about the social aspects of living Australia. When you first came here, where did you first live?
C: I first lived in north Ryde....
R: North Ryde: And who did you live with?
C: No one...just with the householder and three other students ... we ah, didn't know each other.
R: Were they all Chinese?
C: All Chinese, ah, two of them Chinese, one of them is Hong Kong.
R:Alright and what about the householder.
C: Householder is a man from Guangdong... Cantonese...but she can't speak Chinese very well and I don't like her personality and that is why I moved out one week ...one month later.
R: And where did you go then?
C: I moved to M...field which is all the suburb all around Macquarie University.
R: OK and who did you live with?
C I lived with ....students ... in the house live 10 people.
R: All Chinese? All international students?
C: All Chinese. It's a big house ... two floors and at later I met my friends which one we still have contact with each other even though I moved out of Macquarie more than two years.
R: so you've all stayed together.
C : yep.
R: Did you find it very expensive when you first came to live here?.
C : Yeah a little bit but I already had preparation. Before I came here I do some research...
R: So you knew what to expect?
R: When you first came here, how did you manage? Did you get a job?
C: No, I get a first job after I came here around one years two months.
R: Ok, and what was that job?
C: It was in Vibe hotel in housekeeping
R: O ok so that was part of your industry attachment. OK what was the job like.
C I do cleaning and at that time I don't know how to do the work.. How to work as your myself but I have never do that before at home and all my workmates are aunty.. aunties....they do the job very quick.
R: and they were native-English speakers or different nationalities?
C: Different nationalities...but my supervisor was Chinese people
R :and what language did you converse in that job?
C: English and Chinese
R: English and Chinese. But then you went to work ...sorry go on.
C : Because my manager is Nepal and my big supervisor is Philippine and the ... supervisor is Chinese and my workmates like have Nepal, India Chinese and Aussie so we speak English during the break time.
R: And a bit of Chinese and a lot of English.
C: But that job is too quiet.
R: So then you went to the Menzies Hotel?
C: Yeah, because I don't like that kind of working environment. I want to active ... I want something active and positive and so I ..my friends.. my classmate and my friend .. he was working in Menzies Hotels and he said I can recommend you a housekeeping job here because they have more hours because that one is a busy hotel so when I came to interview I ask for the HR officer ...do you have any other position in the beverage department and they said yes we got room service attendant so I said I don't want to be a housekeeper any more so that's why I applied to another department and finally after two interview I got that job.
R: Wonderful
C: It's takes one month to wait.

R: Yeah, but you got the job. Wonderful. So most of your customers...you'd be speaking a lot of English in that job?
C: At all ...because my workmate are Philippines ,Vietnamese, Germany Aussie or only me Chinese people.
R: But your customers? They'd be mostly English speaking.
C: Yeah:
R: That must have been very good for your English:
C: We don't speak too much ...like good morning ...how are you....greeting....or service language.
R: Alright. So how many hours a week did you work there?
C: 20 hours ... sometimes not twenty hours because they don't have enough shift there. Sometimes fifteen or sixteen hours.
R: And you were studying at the same time?
C: Yep.
R : What's your current job?
C: Current job? Current job is working in franchise...drink drink franchise..
R: A Chinese shop?
C: I don't like it I am going to quit it...after I went to China and back to Sydney. I don't like to work for Chinese boss.
R: Why?
C: They are not really care about their staff and of course the salary is not good as western industry and also they have no well being for staff. Even meal I have no time to eat because it busy shop and every staff they have different salary rate so the higher ones don't want the newer coming and they treat me as newer one and they don't want my boss increase my salary. I hate this type of working environment.
R: yes, it's not even or equitable.
C: even though where the competition have where like other people will to do something bad for you but I think it not worth it because I only work there because my purpose is to do a relaxed job in an easy going environment but I don't like some like internal fighting.
R: How many hours a week do you work there?
C: Thirty
R: How do you find that works with your study?
C : Anna and Stephen they recommend me
R: But how many hours do you go to college
C : but I only have three subjects this term so I have two days need to go to school so every day I work ten hours in three days.
R: Ten hours... that's a long day
C : it's a long day and when I finished I have no time for shopping because when I finish all the shops closed.
R: That's a very long day. You'd be saving lots of money.
C: so I don't like it.
R: So who are the customers there...are they mostly Chinese?
C: Chinese.
R: so you don't have much opportunity to speak English there?
C: I have opportunity to speak English when I introduce our products to Western people.
R: Is that often?
C: Mmm. Not very often but other staff they don't like to talk to Western people. I don't know why.
R: OK so it falls on you?
C: I usually do it do that very often because I don't want to lose any customer so I talk to them and introduce them about different drinks.
R: But mostly the customers are Chinese anyway. Alright let's just talk about your experience here.

Was it hard here at first. Did you find it hard?
C: No
R: To come away and live by yourself and study by yourself?
C: No, not really hard.
R; No?
C: I think it's fine because I am a very individual girl. Before I came to Australia. That's mostly because my parents fighting.
R: Well, I suppose there's one benefit. Did you understand the customs here, the Western customs.
C: I think that by country, country build by .....cause at that college we learned a lot of industry customers in the beverages skills and professional conduct about this industry and we have very few Chinese students and that's good I mostly learn from Europe Korea and Aussie.
So what did you think about the customs. If you have to compare Chinese and Western customs, did you find it odd some of the things western people do?
C: Western people they I think they tempo of lifestyle here is , slower than China.
R: Is that good?
C: I think it's good for older people.
Older ... is not really good for young people ...because we all lose the spirit of to create a career cos here is very easier to life even you find an easy job you an fit yourself with your family but in China young people have to work very hard
R: to be very competitive
C: so I think if young people want to create something they should go back to China. It's going to relax and relax
R: so you lose your ambition
C: so you lose your heart
R: what is the best thing about living here.

C: environment...the most creation ... i mean everyone is fair and diversity and working environment is very good because in china most of the people they work extra hour but they don't get paid but here everyone besides Chinese boss i MEAN western ...what ever you work extra they pay extra. They really care about your stuff ...they are sending you to meal every 6 hours and send me to break and really care if they get some hurts or anything

R: What is the worst thing about living here...
C: lonely . and no entertainment life in the night...especially in the night. Because here most of the shop is except Thursday close at 5 o'clock and no one goes shopping in the night . no one go shopping centre ..all people go out at night is for pub or for drink wine or something. In china in the night when we finish dinner we go out we have a look.
R:
C: even in 10 pm they didn't close the door...it's very easy to find foods in china very late but here if the business hours pass it's very hard
R: did you ever feel like giving up your studies and going home?
C: giving up?
R: saying no, this isn't me...giving up and going back to china before you finished your studies.
C: no, I will not.
R: not once even felt that way.
C: I think the purpose I came here is study. I am a student. My property is student to study. What I will work is ...I am a student I am going to choose study. Because my father told me everyone gets different roles in different periods. In this stage you are a student and your problem is to be a good student so do your assignment every day and doing good examination is your responsibility/ if you can't play the correct role in correct period lifetime is just to be rushed. So in different stage I have different role to be and I mean to do it well, that's what I think.

Second interview with Alice

R: I'm going to just ask you to explain to me, your first impressions when you first came to Australia.
A: First impressions? Ummm. When I just came?
R: Yeah.
A: It was just about my talk. I was like, pause, when I saw the western people I'm like I can't speak English to them, like, I'm nervous, really really nervous, and I can't really I know you will find … and in my memory the first day, I was meet S. here and she sent me to the Macquarie Shopping Centre and she got something else to do and she left and only me I am going to catch a bus, I'm so nervous, will way I am going to do and how am I going to buy the bus ticket and how am I going do … do, like I think I was asking some western people something about the bus information and I didn't get what he said, I just know … my face was just .. turned red. Something like that. And I went to the supermarket and I can't find anything. I just feel so high shelve, like so big, and I am tiny here and I just feel this kind of difference, so the lucky thing for me was I my like my living space already been settled before I come to here because they already arrange it for me, I got a room and everything.
R: So where did you first live?
A: Massfield. Near to the Macquarie University, and just 15 minutes walking to there I think.
R: And was it a share house?
A: Yeah, I got an owner yeah, is kind of share house because I'm not home stay
R No?
A They not do the meals or anything self, and the funny thing was when I first came to here my owner was so busy they for the travelling, is only their son he was like a year old than me in the house and he didn't even know today they got a girl moving to the house and when I just arrived and a person just picked me up from the airport called the owners called from oversea and say ah today, and I didn't notice I thought it was next one And anyway, the room was all ready cos I think the one before already moved out.
R So was that a Chinese owner?
A Yeah, a Chinese owner.
R And the other students, people in the share house, were they international students?
A Yeah, they all Chinese international students.
R And did you stay there for very long?
A Half year
R. Half year?
A Yeah
R And where did you go after that?
A After that because I'm study the hospitality I have to move to Manly College yeah and I and Christina and Stephen and Dong we share apartment in Manly and that's the second place I went.
R. And at that time for you, living with three other Chinese students.
A Yes, three Chinese students
R Did you meet any Australians? Or any native English speakers at that time?
A A lot cos because my major's hospitality I saw a lot of people from Western, Switzerland, German, everywhere American even, American, because that's one of the reasons I went there, I went to that school. Choose that major.
R. To have a lot of opportunity?
A Yeah, is like not many Chinese student. In my term only seven of us, Chinese student. Others are speaking other languages. Even from the ah, I think we got people from 12 or 13 countries.
R So English was a common language?
A. yeah, a common language.

R So you found…did you find it very expensive when you first came to Australia?
A yes we did, it's like everything multiplied by six.
Both laugh.
R And so did you have to get a job?
A. No, not really. Because my parents got a lot of support for me, like first year don't worry about it and then the first job came to me just like I didn't really want to apply for that job. It was like Cantonese like how to say brackley……but the place sell the …..kind of like ….because they got a Chinese ….i don't know how to say that, like Easter ocean, some sort of thing like that and I went there just because one of my classmate is working there, and she say, 'hello we need people do you want to come and work to her', so 'okay' I got nothing to do. Like after class we don't really have something to do and cos I don't have a car and in here the one big difference is that everywhere you need to take a bus, transport and a car like so I got nothing to do after that except the study and I say it's okay and the second day the boss called me to come to try like she tried to examine how I am working and the third day say ok just keep on working and that job I did for three months.
R Were most of the customers western or Chinese?
A Chinese cos he was Chinese ……..and that's ……..yeah that's why I don't really like really wanna stay with that job. It's just like nothing for me. Just maybe some a…….is best….
R When you got another job, you got another job though because you were working when you got your diploma of hospitality?
A Ah, yeah yeah yeah. It's because I got like a trainee, internship I needed industry training because of this college I cannot finish that this year and all the hotels every year they came to our college to do the interview with the students and I got the Sheraton and they give me the reply for the second interview and I did three interviews with them and the third interview went to the hotel with executive manager or something some people and at the end of the third interview finish in that afternoon they called me and said you have passed you can come for a job and I like aaaahhhh oh God so happy cos I was like it was like 150 of us and I'm the first group of people has been employed in that group of people so I so happy like I got a place to do the training. At that time I never consider how much is the payment, how well is the employment and how is the everything, I want to get something to do. Actually is part of my course. I have to do some 1000 hours for my course and I couldn't done it even I could not finish my diploma.
R So you finished your course –
A. Yeah, I done 1010 hours.
R. One thousand and ten? And what work were you doing in the hotel?
A The hotel, I'm doing the food and beverage, I'm crossing the food and beverage like I say before, conference, restaurants, bar, club, even club. And the banquets, can say banquets parties like cocktail parties, I'm like crossing around and even in-room dining, I give them some help. Because they employing me they say casual food and beverage attendant, that's my titles.
R So you'd have a lot of opportunity to speak English in that role?
A Yeah, everyday like cos when we like I was lucky because in that year the hotel was running very well and we got a lot of shifts to do and like each week was kind of full time in that year because we got a 9 months to do our industry training and like in average I got 35 every weeks so like during the 35 hours you gotta speak English and also I meet some like ah, how Australians, like my friends, they are background probably is Asian but they grow up in here so they speak very good English and we were like going out, have dinner and like always chatting on the phone I think that's a part a bigger part of my English improvement. And I think that way you think comfortable to speaking English to peoples, like to customers like everyone like
R Yes, the confidence is very important.
A yes, and comfortable you don't feel you don't need to think what am I going to say, is it right? Because I found in that way, the like even English is the first language they never like

saying something like I studied it before so academic like like you have to put everything in right order or ….quite informal, but we could understand each other.
R That's good…that's excellent. Did you find any difficulties in the beginning with Australian customs or culture.
A Yes, yes I do. Especially I am doing hospitality it's kind of huge difference with the food styele and even the dining style and the way you talking to your customers, it's more, in western style it's much more casual you don't need to, oh, like in China you have to be really I don't know, you can't talk to your customers like friends, you have to polite and more professional but here it's like the people stay in the hotel or in the restaurant theya re kind of relaxed and they are nice.
R Do you like that, do you prefer that way?
A Yes of course and I always say they are really nice they are saying everything nice way, even something wrong, even cos of us, they are still really nice yep even this what I meet before but still have some people of course, but 99% of people are nice.
R There's always one per cent that's not
A Yeah, always, always. Some.
R In any culture?
A Right
R What's the best thing about living here in Australia?
A The best things like for me is like can I can like do everything by myself and I can do the decision and I can like and it's kind of like china to do the decisions how you do it, because if I stayed in China with my family probably like of decisions made by them already. My steps, my plans already set up by them. I don't need to worry about it and even the eatings, wash, like houseworking everything you don't need to worry about it but here, you do everything by yourself. It's very good experience for the youngs like ours to start to communication with a society, it's really important, because of group of my friends, we are same age, like 24, 25 now, we couldn't even cook, even the boil the water, even boil the water, they don't know how the water getting hot.
It's unbelievable, like they even don't know how to cutting sort of things like cucumbers, like, are you human like it's just so silly because they never do it. They say to me, when I eat cucumber the cucumber always been cut I don't know how does they look when they original colour. They do, they really do, they just can when they see the cauliflower, they never see this one before and I say that's impossible you always eat it and when you cut it, they say '0h I know this one' after you've cut it.
Both laugh
R After you've cut it?
A Yeah…that's so funny because in China it's traditional the kid like us – because there's only one child – they look after us very well like when I got back to China I never got to worry about eating or my clothes (pron clothers) being washed very well every day I never need to worry, tidy my room, never. Never need to worry like.
R So if you go back to China, you've now become this very independent young woman. How will it be if you go back to China. Will you find it difficult to fit back in to Chinese society?
A: Yeah, I feel that ..
R Can I just say that, one of my interviewees said when I'm in Australia I feel Chinese, when I'm in China I feel Australian.
A Yeah, that's exactly what you're saying, like. But the things if you are in China, you feel you are Australian. The people around treat you as Chinese and when you feel you are different from others, you feel upset like and you start to thinking how others think about you to act in this way and something in this way. Yeah, I found when I came to here, after a year, from difficult to communicate something some issues with my friend in China because they meeting different situation, just like taking an example, like university or subject, which subject you want to do, you will do, like talking about this issue we don't have the same opinions, they don't care, they say 'oh this subject sounds like sounds really maybe the title sounds really nice but I ask them, what does it actually do and they say, I don't know, and I say, why you doing

that one. They say, all of my friends doing that one. It's not the right way to do that. You should think t's not the right way to do that, you should think the right way to do it and cos they didn't bother but they just say no, I wanna go that city, it's a big city, yeah, that's whst they think and I feel hard to explain to them, I feel you are still you have to go back to yourself, like what's the truth, what's the facts is, like you can't or just want to go that city, like in China now like it's hard, if you go to the other city everything fresh, new, you are fresh in tht city and you can't do, it's not easy to start in there, it's like, for you career it's better to stay somewhere you have experience already, that's the truth for them, but always in my generatin they don't want to accept these facts but for me here it's kind of difference yeah, I got an opportunity to go around Australia because in this society is okay.

R So you obviously like this society, but what's the worst thing? My final question. What's the worst thing about living here.

A The worst thing for me you mean in this environment, something about being in Australia you mean?

R Yes, for you, what's the worst thing?

A I homesick. It's a part of me because my parents can't say, are really close friends to me, because in here, is getting more and more Chinese people in here, the Chinese festivals, when they come they do some thing celebrations and when you come you think your families, and you think your parents, they are getting old and they get only one daughter you don't stay with them and they are going to feel lonely, you think a lot about that and you have to start thinking how they think, like you have to care about them, like I started thinking from this year a lot, like, because I'm graduating and my graduation is coming and I have to consider which way I am going to go to do later, like my career, where am I going, like I facing this type of thing to consideration, like how am I going to, like am I going to stay with my family or are they coming here or not. Yeah, but obviously my parents don't want to because it's too difficult for them. Yeah, it's unfair because I homesick to bring them to here. And I know they miss me as well, but I'm trying to just sort, sort of go around my child, that's the biggest thing for me as a daughter, yeah, and the other things are fine, it's good, I like this society, this style.

Second interview with Penny

R So, you've explained why you wanted to come to Australia to study. Was that your choice or your parents' choice?

P My choice.

R Your choice. And they supported you?
And why did you choose Australia instead of say Canada or New Zealand.

P More peaceful. If I go to American I think I my parents said this the life is not very peaceful some war in the some most equality in Australia.

R And when you first came here what were your first impressions. What did you think?

P Like....

R When you got off the plane. When you'd been here for a week or two. What did you think?

P Well I arrived Australia from the window I found oh, not a big city. Like China...not like Beijing and Shanghai. I think it is very poor, Why just in Sydney. ...I .....that.

R Yes, must be, after coming from a city of 18 million people to something quite small. Where did you live when you first came here?

P After one .5 year I come back.

R Yeah, but when you first came here, where did you live?

P Uncertain of meaning

R Clarifies ... yeah, but where....in a shared house? Where??

P I just rent one house, one room, in a unit.

R OK and who else was in the unit with you? Other international students?

P Yeah. International students.

R OK and what about your landlord?

P Chinese

R OK and how long did you stay there?

P HALF year.

R OK and then where did you go?

P Always live with my friends.

R Always Chinese students?

P Yeah, always Chinese.

R Alright. Did you meet any Australians?

P No, just Chinese students.

R Alright. Did you find it very expensive living in Australia?

P Yeah

R So did you have to get a job?

P Yeah

R Where did you work

P In the first three year I just work at home because my boss just put some furniture in my garage....I just .....some .....Macquarie Uni or the website and someone can call me and I just sell the furniture at home. I can get some commission.

R OK so you were working at home. Did that pay very well?

P Just ten per cent commission

R Was your boss Chinese?

P Yeah, Chinese

R And are you working at the moment?

P Yeah

R What sort of job do you have at the moment?

P Consultant

R Consultant?

P Yeah

R Whereabouts?

P Just like AOJI agents from the education

R How many hours a week
P Maybe twenty, twenty five hours.
R And is that an Australian company?
P No.....my boss is Chinese.
R Do you speak to many Australians or many English speakers in your job?
P I contact many universities (?) My students always Chinese
R English. Do you think your English would get better if you could work in an English speaking environment?
P I think if I get work because I working now my English is not improved. If I just do my home I not do.....
R Was it hard here when you first came to Australia? Did you find it hard to fit in?
P Hard?
R Mmmm. Were you lonely at first. Did you want to go home to China?
P No. Because I leave my parents so from a very young I just do my how to say that how to use that word....
R Sort of independent
P Yeah I'm independent so it's okay.
R Are you happy here?
P Mmmmm....I think different China. If I stay in China my parents even though I am very independent my parents always stay with me so sometimes they can help me and in china have many friends I can to play with them but in Australia the first thing I get is very boring in here . after five o'clock any shop is closed so i can just stay in my home so the first thing is I very boring here but because i am very quiet girl it doesn't matter for me.
R And you haven't made many Australian friends?
P No....
R why not?
P I can not get near them. I think ……Chinese is good, Australia are not good.
R Difficult to mix?
P Yeah
R What's the best thing about living in Australia?
P. Best thing? More independence. Yeah, if I come by myself anything you can deal with. And my cookery is better.
R both laugh. So you are coming a much more independent person than you would when you live in China.
P Yeah, and I need to .....everything for me. The money, the job, the study. Mmm so I need to back do back by myself
R And you like that?
P Sometimes I very miss my parents especially in my illness if I get ill I very want to come back.
R Do you think you will go back to China to live?
P What?
R Will you go back to China to live?
P What's you mean?
R Well when you finish your degree do you think you will end up living in Australia or China. Which would you prefer ....if you could get permanent residence where would you prefer to live.
P R both laugh
R Are you going to find an Australian or a Chinese boyfriend?
P I think Chinese....my mother said if you find Australia people how I can to communication with them.
More laughter
R While you were here did you ever feel like going home, forgetting about your studies, just going home?
P You mean going home

R Just some days do you just feel bad here and want to go back to China.
P Yeah
R Why is that?
P In last year my grandmother have died so i not very in that time i want to come back in another time my mother ill in hospital for one month I very want to come back but sometime my parents don't tell but I guess something bad for my mother I just call him and my father no worry just fine is very good no anything happened but I always think oh something happened so every day i call back before I just one week one call but in that time every day I call back and my father always said no nothing happened but .....heavy breath out.
R You knew?
P Yeah, I know then my mother is very bad health then tell me I thought ok you tell me but i have know even though you don't tell me.
R Yes, that's when it's very hard isn't it when you're living away.
P When if you go back to China to live, how will this experience here changed you? Will you still be the same girl that you were when you left China four years ago?
P mmmm, no I don't think so. Maybe if you live in Australia the people is more simple. If you come back, Chinese idea is very mmmm....confused sometimes you need to do something or whatever you need to transfer your idea to tell people if in Australia you just tell me directly but in China you cannot. You need to do some idea with how to communication with people.

Second Interview with James....

R: In our first interview we talked a lot about the academic side of your education. I want to talk more about the social aspects in this interview, particularly, thinking back, why did you want to come to Australia to study?

J: Well, firstly I think the culture was a little different because the education .....was different from China. It just feels like it is not really a good fit for me and there's actually no uni accepts me at that time so it just gives me an option or second chance to study abroad.

R: So was it your choice or your parents' choice to come to Australia? I

J: Oh, I think it was a mutual thing I think. Actually discuss it a little bit but we decided to study overseas but we really hadn't been sure which country, then we started searching all the information, look up from the internet and it would ah, depend on a couple of things. Because money was always an issue and study in Australia was a little bit cheaper than other place, and actually like the weather and the place was really nice....so I decided to go with it?

R What was your first impression when you first came here? When you first got off the plane...?

J Oh the sky was really blue, and the air was really nice...laughs....and other than that I'm really sleepy so I just feel all the way around on the bus to the accommodation and the first one week it feels a little depressed because I was not here for so long and different culture and I had to speak English all the time with the home stay and well just getting better, like this, I think, it was not bad but a little bit nervous. The first time to be away??

R You were very young

J Yeah, I think that could be it.

R So where did you live when you first came here?

J I live in home stay. It was still in Parkwood area (Gold Coast) area but a little bit farther from the Uni.

R OK, and what was the family like that you lived with

J They come from Philippines....the homestay wife was come from Philippines and the home stay father was never be home

R Never home?

J Yes, he got business

R So, did you meet any Australians at that time? Or, any native English speakers?

J Not really ....because I have to do my language course so the first ten weeks I always study always other foreign students so....not much native speakers but I meet some teachers

R And what about now? Do you have any Australian friends?

J I do have a lot of foreign friends but not many Australian friends I think. We didn't really share much common interest you know? And we didn't really talk much during the lecture, and ah, the interesting thing is, last semester I got one class....no student was come from China. But all my lecturers and tutors come from China.
Both laugh

J It was bizarre you know.

R What subject was that?

J Financial ??????? laughs again ..... unbelievable.

R So, you didn't stay very long with your first homestay.

J No, because I feel like, ah, I think I am ready to move out, and that place was really far away from uni so I decide to move a little bit closer.

R OK so where did you move to?

J To .....that was only .....
R OK and who did you move in with?
J With other roommates, we share a house.
R OK, and were they Australians, or Chinese?
J No, all overseas students, we got two or three Chinese students live down there and ah a couple from Thailand and one from Hong Kong I think.
R Did you communicate much with them?
J Yes, a lot.
R In what language?
J Ah, With Chinese people, of course in Chinese, but with other people we speak English.
R Yeah, so that was good do you think? Did that help your English?
J Yeah, a lot because we are all really dreadful (?) with English at that time and so we tend to understand each other, we try to help each other a little bit. That sort of thing.
R Excellent. Did you find it very expensive living in Australia

J Yeah, I think so. At the first place we didn't work a lot and because I think ah, for Australian salary it's not that much but if we pay in Chinese dollar we have to convert in Chinese dollar and that's a lot I think.
R How did you manage? Did you get a job?
J Yeah, I got a part time job at a Chinese restaurant at that time.
R In a Chinese restaurant? And were you serving customers? Or working in the kitchen?
J Both ..... I kinda like a waiter and a kitchen hand....something in between.
R And most of your customers came from where?
J Ah that was a really small restaurant so lots of take aways and they come from local I think.
R Local? Ok so did you get a lot of opportunities to practise your English at that time?
J Yeah, but most of them are limited into the restaurant stuff.
R Yeah, sweet and sour pork, fried rice?
J both laugh
R So was that the only job you've had
J Yeah, I think so. For that time
R But since then?
J Yeah, since then I changed to another Chinese restaurant. It hasn't been changed much and after I got back from Singapore I got a little bit more English but not much.
R OK so how long were you in Singapore?
J Ah, for ...not more than one month, something like that.
R OK...how many hours, when you were working, how many hours a week were you working?
J Ah, fifteen.
R Fifteen on top of your studies? Did you find that hard?

J Not really...I only have to be in uni like three days a week .. that's got plenty of time to work and got plenty of other time to have a rest or study.
R So the fifteen hours – was that the maximum you were allowed to do?
J No, the maximum was 20 in any study week.
R What about now? Do you have a job at the moment?
J Not
R Why not?
J I'm looking for one. I don't want to work in restaurant any more...I just want ...a book-keeping job or something like that.
R Alright, no success there so far?

J No, not at the moment. It's tough ....tough at the moment, I think.

R Very tough. Tell me what it was like just coming back to when you first came here, did you find it hard in the beginning?

J Yeah, I think...I was actually pretty lucky because I did a .....pre....the program we did in LangFang was helping us and we didn't really feel struggle about all the .....about here and when we come here I did my language course for 10 weeks and that one it was like a pre uni study, it was really nice, and it gives me a smooth connection between pre uni and actual uni study. It was not bad. We ..took out some ... times (?) because we do have study in big lectures and ah, sometimes we feel like after the lecture we didn't really have too many people to talk with you know. But at last we adjust into the study process here, it feels nice I think.

R Do you feel at home here?

J Yeah, exactly, at the moment. The last ...the first time I went back home for three months, I just felt 'oh my God, when's the holiday over?'

R Oh really? Why?

J I ....you share different views with all your friends these days. Last time we study here, we use a little English they all speak Chinese. It was like 'oh my God what the hell you talking about. Get over here'. (both laugh). Trying and you know after you been out you trying to do other things by yourself so you tend to grow up a little. You are different so that's all our friends was still studying at home so we share a little bit different ...just it's just while we are here we also go out while we was here so our values was more closer. We can talk more easily.

So after you go out you got to do other things by yourself you know. You tend to grow up a little you know. It's just like a little so all our friend was still studying it's just like they share a little bit different from you. It's just while we were here we also go …..So our values more closer like….we can talk more easily together.

R Talk about your friends here. Where do they come from?

J Ah, I got couple that come from Hong Kong, or I got one from Brazil and I got one from other Asian countries. Pretty diverse.

R That's great. So English would be a common language?

J Yes, exactly.

R It's an opportunity to use English constantly?

J xxxx

R One of my other friends said when she's in Australia she feels Chinese, but when she's in China she feels Australian.

J Yeah, we do really feel Australian when we in China…we feel Australia sometimes…because we ah, we have been in totally different culture so we feel think different, little bit different. We think too many things so we tend to,, when we in China we always thought everything from overseas was good better but when we actually come here we learn the good thing from the bad thing when we come back to our s…..we talk about the good things….it probably work that way. And something like that.

R can you give e some examples

J Ah, well, let me see. Well, ……..we know sometimes some of them can be rude, sometimes, and also they say, ah, let me think, they also say some ting…….because of something in the TV or say ……

R That's very true. That's very noisy. Do you think you understand the customs here?

J We didn't really socialise with locals a lot so probably not understand the customs for the culture per se but I just like in the uni we learn about what is …and what is not and I think …..

R Alright….and what do you think about Australian people in general?

J In general they are really nice and really friendly and ten to ……..for overseas students and they just …….

R that's good. That's nice. What's the best thing about living here do you think?

J Ah is the environment, obviously, and the living condition was great. Also the environment is the feeling it gives to you, you can relax a little bit you don't really have to …….or something like that. And the ……it was not slow, it was balanced. That's the truth.
R And what's the worst things about it?
J Ah, it just because we still feel like a little bit like both sides because the culture thing never really communicate with our friends and some things because different study schedule and everyone got different study times and ah, I's hard to communicate with other but …..
R You said you have one semester left to go in your master's degree and then you'll try again got your IELTS. Tell me, your last IELTS score was excellent except in one ….
J I just got trouble in writing….I ……..got 7.5 on average but last two times I find that one but always got 6.5 on writing…
R So you need a 7?
J Actually the 6 is good enough for me at the moment because I got actual points on the master degree so is I just see whether I get one or not.
R So next time you're confident you'll get pr?
When you finish your degrees?
J Yes, if the situation doesn't change a lot I can get Pr.
R And so what will you do then? What's your ultimate plan?
J I will find job and do my CP or CPA study and get accountant licence.
R OK so your aim is to get your CPA and work in Australia?
J Yes, but work first and then get my CPA
R An ultimately will you go back to China?
J I haven't really decided that yet but I think , ah, I don't really think *I got much opportunity to work at the top level inn Australia so I think I will probably finish my CPA go back to China….another 10 years. See how it goes
R You wouldn't stay here, try to work your way through here?
J I think it would be a little bit too hard for me. I think ah, I think in China the working environment would be more comfortable for me I think. I fee3l like I can re3ally do something.
R Do something in what respect?
J Ah, business or something.
R Achieve something?
J Yeah, ah, you know ah, jus to probably want to have my own company or something like that. I am not sure but I still have to work from the low level.
R But you'll give yourself options by getting 0R?
J Yeah. Exactly.
You can choose? And when you're ready you can make a decision?
J But for the time being, one more semester
R I
J laughs …
R I
J

Interview 2 with Daisy. 16/23 17/23

R: And this is our second interview and I talked to you before about why you came to Australia to study, but what I didn't ask you, was it your choice, your parents' choice? What influenced you to come? I mean you were so good at school you could have gone to a Chinese university?

S: Yes. It's my choice. And actually I decide first I choose from Canada and Australia I decide to go to .....to study and my parents they asked their friends and they told them Australia is better because for bachelor degree you only need three years and the people are nice that's why I come to Australia.
R: When you first came here what were your first impressions?
S: Giggling.....it's like a country ...oh now, it's quite different from China. In China you can see high building everywhere, but here the house is really old, most of them old and I thought it's not looks good ..no, and you know my immigration agent they find a place for me and it's really bad and I can hear others talking in other rooms.
R: Where was that?
S: In ....field, next to Macquarie. You know the quality's really bad and when I first came here I thought I go , I mean I went back to southern 20 years ago in China. It's quite different, but when I stay longer I felt comfortable about this.
R: Did you move out of that accommodation? How many people lived in that accommodation?
S: My first accommodation? Five?
R: And they were all international students? From?
S: China.
R: And what about your landlord?
S: Chinese. And the problem is that I felt very lonely when I first came to Australia because everybody in the room they just stay in their room and they don't speak to others and I don't see them and I couldn't even see them in the house and I thought it was bad you know, some international students they come to Australia they don't do a lot of social life they just do the computer, play computer games or chatting with their friends or watching drama or movies but their only life is computer, computer and school.
R: So did you stay in that accommodation for very long.
S: One month.
R: Where did you move?
S: It's also in .....field, just different house
R: A share house
S: Yes
R: With other Chinese students
S: No, because when I decide to move out, Lidia come to Australia, came to Australia and she want to live with me so we moved share a unit, just the two of us, because we are friend before and if we live together we can help out each other and support each other.
R: Did you meet many native English speaking people when you first came here?

S: Um, native speaking people. You mean friends?
R: Yes, mostly friends. Did you make many friends at university?
S: Ah , not much.
R: No? Why was that?
S: It interesting you know because the class isn't like China. You just stay in one class and every day you meet different people and every time you sit in different place. And it's hard to know others. And for this semester we study together but the next semester we choose different subjects and you know we don't get in touch with each other.

R: Did you get much opportunity to use your English....apart from just at the university.
S: Apart from university (clarifying ...)
R: Yes, apart from at university, did you get much chance to use your English. How did that go? Or did you tend to stay in a very small group of Chinese people?

S: I really tried to extend my friends. I want to you know more friends with locals but it's hard for example after i realised i really need to expand my friends and Lidia and I both moved to Macquarie University accommodation
R: You mean you moved from the flat to Macquarie?
S: Yes, why we do that we thought it could be an opportunity for us. We could have more friends and have more communication with the locals because there are five people live in one house yes and Macquarie ...it's just university accommodation and then you have more chance to know others. The problem is ummm...we can't speak to each other very politely but it's hard to go through it, I mean the topics is very easy and you can't feel you are in touch with that, very hard.
R: In the way that you would if you are speaking Chinese, gossiping, chatting, talking about different things.
S: Yes, it's different. And maybe also because our culture and something else. You can speak to each other but if you want to be close friends it's really hard.
R: Very difficult.
S: Yes.
R: Did you find it very expensive when you first came here.
S: Expensive? Yes. Laughs
R: So how did you manage? Did you get a job? Did your parents send you more money?
S: I got a job but not during the semester, just for holiday.
R: Where was that job?
S: In city
R: Doing what?
S: Sales. And the pay actually I do that not because of payment just because I want to practise my English and know more about other people.
R: So that was the shop. What sort of shop was it?
S: Not shop, it's like business to business sales and you just go to, you just have business every day you go to the office and there's a group and people just encourage each other and you go out and to the office and shops and just do sales.
R: So did you get a lot of opportunity to practise English?
S: Ah yes. Less kind of opportunity.
R: OK so how many hours a week?....your other colleagues work colleagues, were they mostly Chinese, English, all sorts of different people?
S: Oh no, no most of them it's from all places maybe Europe, French, i meet French, and some people from England and some from India, china, Malaysia, you know lots of people.
R: So you were speaking English because that would be a common language?
S: Yes, yes.
R: So that was your first job. How long did you keep that?
S: Ah, three to four months, yes.
R: And have you had any jobs since?
S: What?
R: What other jobs have you had since then?
S: Um, no.
R: But now, you've got your degree. Tell me about what you're doing now.

S: After I finished my degree I have a long holiday and I go back to china and I just have a rest. Then when I went back I tried to find a job and it was really hard. Maybe the language was a problem and now i just apply for I am not pr or citizen and for bank or financial institutions they prefer to provide the opportunity to the local and that's why i find its really

hard to find a job now and the other thing i thought is the bachelor's degree has nothing to do with the job, it's totally different and that shocked me at first because in china you know if you got a degree from a good university it's easy to get a good job but in Australia every time they just ask whether you have experience and ask you some questions about the experience and and your and yeah ... i can't...let me think. Yeah, ask whether you got .....it's only diploma degree and it's easy to get it it only takes two months but they thought this is even more important than the degree so first i felt shocked.. .

R: Did you think it was because you were Chinese?
S: Sometimes I thought so. Yeah, because they are not maybe my English is not good enough and in finance you know people they want good English speaking and another I think the most important thing is is I'm not pr or citizen because I got some friends and they got pr and they can find job much easier than me.
R: So you'll apply for pr?
S: Yes
R: Have you already applied?
S: Yes.
R: And what's the progress of that?
S: Ah, I'm still waiting.
R: Is your IELTS score high enough?
S: Ah, when I apply for that it was.
R: Excellent. When do you expect to hear?
s: Mmm what do you mean?
R: When do you expect to find out about pr?
S: Um, I don't know because they told me recently the immigration they don't approve much.
R: So you are thinking of buying a business. Tell me about that.
S: mmm because after three months i thought it was really difficult to find a job and i don't want just to stay here or just go for another degree. Recently i don't know what's that mean, most of my friends ask me why don't you just go on studying but for what? If you can't get a good job for bachelor degree why do you expect you can get a good job after you finish your master degree. I even don't have any experience yes that's part so I discussed it with my parents and my boyfriend and we decided to start our business and my first at the beginning i want to start a coffee shop because just i like the style and i thought it was good and relaxed and yeah but it's when i tried to find a good business i learnt a lot during the process. First I need to buy a good business not a cheap business you know and secondly, people are not honest in the business, they always lie, you can't rely on anyone you just the only thing you can rely is your eye and because I ...a long time and I saw the business it's a takeaway shop because yeah, and i thought it easier to start even thought it's not coffee it's easier for me to start. The problem is I worked really hard during that two weeks but the taking is different from what they said so i realised maybe maybe they are they told me the truth, because of that because of raining, because of financial year and winter maybe and the sales going down, but i thought he is not honest, yeah, i believe he lied to me so ....
R: Was he Australian?
S: Greek .... Greek yes.
R: So now your next business you're thinking about?
S: Yeah, because during that process I next thought .. it'.s interesting the business next door is takeaway shop and the next shop is newsagency and at the beginning we just don't consider about that business and my girlfriend just went in and discussed with each other and because the purpose is we want to get more information about the takeaway shop and because they are neighbour and finally he thought the newsagency more stable and then we just talk with the owner of the newsagency he's also Chinese and yeah he told us the shop is also for sale but at that time he don't know we will buy the shop . he thought we are focussed on takeaway shop actually we changed our idea very quickly because we both thought for food

business they both can you can make good money you can make good money and you can loss it's really up to our stable and for the beginning it is not good for us because if we fail we lost confidence and newsagency the one thing for newsagency the one benefit is it's stable and the second thing is we can read news in the newspapers and we can have more opportunities to speak to locals. I don't think we make life business, i don't think so, but for the beginning we just stay here because for me, you know we will form a family in the future, for him, he has his plan but for me, if I got my pr i really want to go out and find a finance job and during this time if i work and start a newagency business i got more time to read news about finance and i think it's good for me.

R: Good experience .. that's true.

S: Yeah, yeah.

R: Let me just finish off now by asking you, did you find the customs in Australia funny, strange when you first came here.

S: Customs.?

R: Customs, the culture. Not customers, the customs.

S: I know I know. Funny, no I don't think.

R: No, you were prepared for what you found when you came here?

S: Mmmm, I just I don't understand you by the funny because I think it's normal, not too funny for me. No I don't think so, and I because I really can't remember.

R: But you feel you fitted in quite easily and quite well?

S: Yes, not that way because I you know I feel comfortable because I try to find a business and during that process I talked to a lot of people, yes, because we are doing business but if we for friends, i found it hard to get friends in Australia just because of culture, you know, and before I got a boyfriend, he's Chinese but he's born in Australia, he couldn't speak any Chinese, and one time i told my friends to come to my place and he just want to ask me to go out and have a look at movie and I called him and I asked him whether we can set my friends to home first then we go for the movies and then he answered me, 'okay, I'm not a taxi driver'....oh....laughs, I don't know maybe he's personal thinking, maybe it's about Australia thinking, people care about you ....English in and they care about you not your family, not your friends, and that's quite different. We care about you and your family and your friends and .....laughs...

R: Everyone

S: Everyone, we have to have good relationship with them but for him, he thought i just , you are my girlfriend, i just need to care of you, i just need to treat you good for others, nothing to do with me. Laughs

R: that' funny. ...And finally, what's the best thing about living in Australia?

S: Mmmm...environment, to be honestly, and not too much pollution. In china even in America English there's a lot of pollution (says promotion) and I think the weather here is also good, better than the place where I came from where there have too much difference in my home town. Here is alright and thirdly the people are friend friendly and they are helpful sometimes even though you talk to a stranger you ask them some questions, they are happy to help you and also the education because why i want to live in Australia maybe for my following life because i want my children to get good education yes.

R: So you plan to stay in Australia?

S: Yes, I plan and I thought I thought yeah, Australia is a low crime country. I feel safe here.

R: What's the worst thing about living here?

S: Mmmm....lonely yes because I don't have much friends and even though I don't know why people come to Australia and become more selfish...they care about themselves more than others .if they do so it's hard to get.....

R: You mean Chinese people?

S: Chinese people is hard to get friend. In China maybe in China you can't feel that people selfish but here you can strong feel that I don't know why and the others is in Australia you can only shopping from nine to five, that's really funny because most of people go to work

from nine to five and the shopping centre you know, they sell things from nine to five and then people just finish their work and they also finish their work. Laughs....when i first came here i really feel funny what's they sell, to whom, you know. You know they only have three days for sale, Thursday night, Sunday and Saturday...yeah, that's it. And the other days I don't know why they are open. Maybe some people come but the majority they just have to go for work.
R: Yes, it is very odd. Alright I will just ask you one last question,. Would you feel differently about china. You've been living here for what, five, four years ....
S: Four years
R: Do you feel differently about China when you go home?
S: Aaaahhh, yes.
R: How?
S: Mmm...
R: Do you feel a bit like a Western girl when you are in China, a bit like a Chinese girl when you are in Australia?
S: Yes, you know because you know my friends my classmates they still study at university I thought the life of .how to say the ability to manage their life they lack that ability and they just study study study I feel I am so lucky to come to Australia because I learned to do everything by myself. I can, you know I feel I grow up a lot and compared to them I feel I am more mature than them, yes, so mmm but in China mmm you know the other thing i like Australia if you don't like this, you don't need to do this, but in china you have a dinner together if you don't like this sometimes the people just give it to you and its hard to reject it so you feel uncomfortable.
R: So, you have more obligations?
S: Yeah, yes and what's the difference let me think about, I feel that compared to my my peers i grow up a lot.
R: very quickly
S: yes, and what else? In China people like to watch mmm tv show like its really like a lot of ghosts ... do you know .....?
R: No
S: happy ghosts...a lot of girls watch .....and just like competition and they are singing and they just pick up the top, people like to watch that kind of show and when I go back I felt its ..laugh...no, not pointless...not interesting.
R: so you've matured a lot in four years?

S: Yes, i think mmm my thinking change a lot during the four years. When i see how they work, what are they doing, sometimes i feel stupid and waste of life for example most of my friends just go on studying they don't know how to cook, how to tidy room and they don't know if you want to make a deal how to talk, how to discuss, they don't know about that, the only thing they need to know is study and maybe they just go out for social life. Yes, it seems that they don't have much pressure and i don't think that's good and they just rely on their parents and the most difference between Australia and Chinese is Chinese people rely especially for our generation they rely on their parents and when i came to Australia it impressed that most of .....they just try to find a job when they were really young, even 13, 15, the agency they have paper boy, they try to go out, do some job and to get paid that's what I like most about Australia.

R: Independence?
S: Yes, independence, i t's very important for individual develop ..yes.

Crystal: third interview

R So, here we are, 12 months....14 months since our last talk and now you are going home tomorrow. How does that feel?

C It's feel finish one period, finish one road, I've finished this adventure and I'm going to just start another adventure in the future, for the future, in my whole life. Just feel something....fulfilment, that's the word, achievement, and finally I got one paper to say, hey Crystal you have a master degree now you have finished and now you are adult like ready to step into a career. And no assignment no exam anymore, excited. laughter

R Excited, and a sense of fulfilment, but how are you feeling now about the future? What does the future hold for you? Describe your feelings about the future.

C: About the future: I think I got professional skill, accounting, It should be a brighter road for for me to enter. If I stay in Australia, if I decide to stay in Australia, it should be white and black, it should be white and black for me because I got a lot of friends they cannot find a good job, they cannot find a fulltime accounting job, even book-keeper, even accounts clerk, they cannot get offer from the boss, so they doing lots of like job not related to their professional subjects they just doing sales or something like that . But in China I'm different. Because I'm Chinese, I'm local, I'm local there, and I gotta English, I got two language, I know Chinese, I have very excellent Mandarin skill, and on writing, speaking, and I do have, know English, I do can read English reports, can do accounting in English and can read like accounting materials in English from international company something like that and I do have the Master degree from USW so I think it should be ok for me to find a job.

R And your father wanted you to be an accountant and there was a plan you told me all those months ago of going home to work in your father's business, but that's not what your immediate plan is.

C Yeah, because my dad's business is doing manufacturing and they only got an executive office not really large, because they have the financial manager, they got the financial analyst and they got the book keeper as well, um, my dad doesn't want me to be the, the company to be the book keeper, cause I don't think I'm qualified to do analyst at the moment so the only job I can do is to do the book keeper so it's not really meaningful for me to do the job, and for my parents they want me to have a career which is a skilled one, that means even if I left even I leave this industry for while once I want to come back I can still start my career immediately. Like if I doing something in administration, or something documentary like secretary, it is really hard for women over 30 years old to come back to this industry so they want me to have a skilled job, skilled like accounting, accounting is a skilled job, so they want me to study in a professional accounting company to learn something faster. I think probably they want me to work around 3 years and get my CPA and get three years working experience to finish my exams that's very good plan for the first three years to me.

R So you're doing your CPA, you start your CPA once you're back in China?

C I'm doing it now. I ....enrolled in financial reporting, the subject, last semester but because I was busy on my master degree so I just defer the exam to this semester. I just need to finish the six professional subjects in six years, plus three years accounting working experience and I can be ah, independent.. it's.... I can be independent accountant.

R And so you will have within six years, but probably not as long as that you'll be a cpa, a practising cpa, you'll have accounting experience. How do you see your future ....broadly....not just after the next few years but your whole career.....and life.

C. For idea of my dad, he wants me to gain the professional knowledge about accounting, finally, go to back his company to do the operate office, the financial operator. I think that's his plan.

That's his plan. What about you...would you like to work abroad, travel, or would you be happy working in your father's business in your career.

C Yes I think I'm happy working with my family business because at that time in .....imagine, I probably got a child and I probably get married and get a child and think it's very

important to consider education of the children so I don't want to be like bored, alone and I think I should consider a relationship between whole family and also stable life is very important for women.
R OK.....How will your Australian education contribute to your future.
C Australian education?
R Yeah, the education you've had here. How will it make a difference.
C I think it's definitely quite different from Chinese one. The education. Very specially I got the a practical experience – not even ain the accounting part but in the during the during the work I have gain a lot I think comparing to the students who graduate from Chinese university I got more social experience working experience and know how to communicate with other people. I know how to deal with environment when you feel some difficulties and I think .....major learn that...and those Australian university we they teach they teach us knowledge in English it's quite different, logical to Chinese and also lecture, lecture independently thinking, that's what we call critical thinking, that's quite different.
R And that will help your career even though you'll be working in China.
C I don't know, because they said China there's very complicated relationship in office and they need to heritage, they need to like choose your boss, but in Australia we doan't need to do that.
Interrupt.

Continued
R We were talking about heritage and choosing your boss. Like you going to choose your boss but in Australia you don't need to do that
C Just in Australia I don't need to do that. Just finish my job and I go. Just finish. Boss do not have rights to bother employees' holiday. When they have holiday. If they going to ask employee to do something they should notice (give notice) that in advance. But in China, I don't think they do that. So probably it should be a period for me to adjust to that.
R So perhaps would a Chinese education in that case given that you are going to be living and working in China, would that have been just as good as your Australian education?
C Because I read a lot of news they said those from overseas to back China, they always thinking about their personal rights, that's what Chinese boss does not like. Because we know what is personal rights after I arrive in Australia, after I working in Australia and I didn't think about , didn't consider about this problem when I was in china, probably because of age, probably because of education, we have never been educate by this topic, but after that after I living Australia for 4 and a half years I know what is that.
R So how will you use that knowledge in China?
C How do I use knowledge?
R That knowledge about personal rights and how to, how employees should be treated?
C It's quite different because the population in China is quite large. If I don't want to do this job a lot of people standing behind me, they are waiting for this job, and they are willing to have different secreture (?) even their own time, even their money, they don't care they just want to keep this work but probably for me I will ask for extra pay. Maybe it's impossible but to from the nature purpose I think I do extra job for a year you should pay me extra and you say you finish at 7 in the night, you should let me go at 7 o'clock and if the boss asks me to do extra work they should let me know in advance one or two days before, not at the time I should finish job and the boss said hey you should stay until 12 o'clock. That what I think is the basically different things.
R So you'll need to really adjust and may be compromise a little?
C I think I should....a lot of friends they said they said I should to adjust it should be a lot of comfit when I really enter to the environment, the working environment, I don't know how what I my reaction, what's my reaction when I really facing this job, this issues, because I am really easy , really easy person to fight with, so I don't know what exactly is going to happen. (laughter)

R So maybe in 6 months time you will be able to tell me the answer to that. That's going to be another interesting question. Isn't it you will be able to tell me?

C I am really a person very easy to fight with both
R So you are quite strong?
C Yeah, a little bit unfair I will feel NO, WHY do i need to accept this result. Like I working by Hotel Menzies part time and Grollenges Coffee if boss didn't pay me on that day, I will call you. I will say why didn't you do transfer money to us. You should keep your promise.
R Absolutely. So maybe you'll be a bit of a catalyst for change. When you go back to China, you're doing a great job, you have expectations, maybe you'll be able to influence that Chinese way of thinking.
C Maybe?
R Maybe? A little bit at a time?
C Yeah, but I'm not really into change myself ...
R I don't mean you change, I mean you change the environment...the boss's expectations..
C I thk now the new generation they already start to think about this question and I think a lot of student they have the overseas study experience , they know it.
R So things will change over time?
C I hope so. I hope I can change a little bit, influence a little bit.
R Crystal, could you put some sort of estimate on how much your Australian education has cost you. Just a rough estimate.
C Only the tuition fee or plus the living fees here.
R Say the tuition fee first, and then what about the whole thing.
C OK tuition fee for my bachelor one I think at least 30,000.
R Thirty thousand?
C At least $30,000
R And the masters?
C The masters quite a pricey ... I think USW is the most pricey one, because we got one subject for first semester is 2010 because they change it every year, the first year is $3,660 for one subject.
R and how many subjects?
C four subjects for that semester.
R So, 12 thousand
C And another year 2011 they change per subject to $4050 for per subject, we got four subjects.
C I had eight subjects together for the master degree. It's really pricey.
R So, like 30,000 odd thousand
C It's like lecture, average cost more than 300 Australian dollar for 3 hours. They only had the one lecture per subject per week.
R Do you think it was worth it, now that you've finished?
C I think it's worth for my whole life change. Cos I think my life also got changed things I entered to NSW...That's the campus I dream about, that's the study environment I dream about and also they also offer a lot of student benefits as well.
R Tell me about those?
C Student benefits?
R Yes, please.
C Yeah, we did campus wifi everywhere, and we do have um, for like the career one, the school do provide very important and useful employment information to us, and they do have the regular workshop for how to write resume and how to do the interview. Interview tips. Something like that.
R That was in the Masters, for the University of New South Wales?
C That was for all students. Even sometimes they if the student not in USW if they get the information they can attend it, because they didn't record any name.

R OK, so people can just come and take part.
C Yeah, they can, a lot of workshop like exam help, useful exam tip, how to do exam how to save time on exam, from variety effects, also they have life, workshop for life, entertaining, where to go. And for sports as well, they got a lot of different.
R You have been to a few different universities now, private and public, did you find that at all of the .... Macquarie, Holmes?
C Yeah, of course. I hate Holmes.
R Holmes? That's the private one? Why was that?
C Definitely different. Holmes doesn't have campus. They just have only got one building got ten levels but then. Of course for student benefits they can not do such more like the government one can do because I think the national one they got the support from government every year and they will pay for a lot for students every year. Chinese students probably doesn't know the benefits, what they can get, because their life is very personally ... they don't like social with western students, and they don't care what website said, they don't care.... emails the school send it to them, they don't read it.
R No?
C They don't read it.
R Why is that?
C One of my friends, she's my classmate in USW, because in April I apply for the career expo for the volunteer and they accepted me to be the volunteer in the career expo and I ask my friends to come, I say they they got more than 130 employer to come, very famous company, why you don't to come to have a look what happened in your industry.
They say, WHOA, where did you get this information. I said, did you receive the email. They say no, I have never checked that email box which t he school gave you. They never check it and they didn't know we got a career department , the career department which helps students to find a job, they didn't even know the school got this department, they even didn't know where the office is (very emphatic).
R But how did you find out about it?
C I check the email, they send me an email and I register to the career department so that the students who registered here and I can receive the e-newsletter every month.
R OK, so what's the problem there? Is it with the universities not with their communication. Should they be trying to look at other forms of communication. Or is the problem with the Chinese students? What is the problem there?
C I think the problem is with the Chinese students.

R So how could that be overcome? Why don't Chinese students take advantage of .....
C Because they don't want to .....they think sometime at the beginning because they not quite open themself they feel lonely here and they want to find some friend close to them like also the Chinese friends as well and they will have one feeling like i hate every western things around me. I don't want to read a western newspaper, I don't want to see television program, I don't want to talk to western people, and also, I hate this school, I hate the lectures, everything so they just keep mind what they think in their little worlds...
R Is that because they are lonely and they are not sure?
C Yeah, they are lonely. Also I think it's the personality from Asian people, from Chinese people. I think definitely. They just think they are great but exactly they are not great, they are not great. They are not such great, like .....um, they think a lot of Chinese people they think they aree so great and Western people
R What do you mean by great?
C Like, we got a lot of invention, our nation's got so much inventions, and Western people, you just immigration from, you know, they got this kind of thinking in their mind.
R But that's sort of a contradiction isn't it? They think they're great but they come here to study. I don't understand that.
C Yeah, and they always think, oh western people, I came here to study, I am the guest, you know, and why do I need to talk to you and why do I need to learn your culture, I don't

need to learn your culture, that's what they think. I got my culture, you got your culture, I understand but once you come to this society you should adapt to ....otherwise we are all at the age of this society..

R Is that why, do you think, so many international students fail, particularly Asian students. Is that why, do you think?

C Probably that's why , that's what my opinion, but I ah, sometimes I really doesn't like what they think, I doesn't, because some Chinese students, they are so rude.

R Rude?

C Yeah, they are really rude. Even they don't know even what is polite...what is politeness.

R Is that a cultural thing?

C I think it is cultural thing. Very serious cultural things.

R So what ....give me some examples.

C Probably because I came here 4 and a half years I have already have adopt, inside I am Chinese but I know a lot of Western politeness, how to do it. Like, we should switched off mobile phone in the lecture time, right. At least to keep it to quiet. But Chinese students, they don't. All Asian students, some Koreans. They don't ....

R Vietnamese too.....

C It doesn't make sense. We should have a quiet environment when we have lecture. At least respect your lecturer. But they didn't. I just found every lecture, there's some there's some mobile phone ringing up.

R How do the lecturers respond to that?

C Lecturers, told them to switched off your mobile or keep it to quiet but they just still keep doing that. That's quite amazed, why! Just normal thing, very normal thing, like, and we got a common room in my school cos Australian school of business in USW and we got one building, and level one, ground level we got one common room for postgraduate students, and you know most Chinese people studying business, and our building got a lot of Chinese students, and once you enter the common room you will feeling very hot, smelling, and meals smelling, everything and once you enter to and you can't find any seat, because the students who even didn't study there they put their book on, they put their bag on, and the common room got a fridge, they put all of their food there, like a family, you know. Open this, they got milk, milk full cream, bread toast, vegetable, everything, I'm so surprising, whoa, is that your kitchen? laughs

R And that's what? They are not showing respect for other students?

C They not go don't have social life, they came to Australia and they just study there. Just study. And they go home. Probably you know the rental around the school is very high, very very, amazing high and they can probably need to share a room with another person so they like to study at school, so they rent the locker and they put all the book in, and after lecture they came to common room and have a meal there, study there, watch movie there.

R So it becomes like home? And is that because they have lots of other people say from China, they have language, common language they talk, they socialise.

C Yeah, one reason is is that; another reason is they don't have other social life. All social life is....can go with Chinese person, Chinese friends, Chinese class-mate. They all study together. They don't have like a school activity. We do have like I said career expo, they don't want to come. We do have workshop to tell you where to come, they don't want to come, they don't care. And also we got sports activity and also I don't think most Chinese student they attend.

R No, so that's a problem they bring their culture with them and don't want to integrate but what about the university. Should the university actually be saying, we need you to integrate; you will do better if you integrate, should the university be doing some things to make sure that international students are paired up, with say a local person, so that, I mean, how do you get over this?

C I don't know cos I think it's time it's a problem on time, because I talked to one of my classmates she came here only one and a half year. Half year for language, one year for master degree. She doesn't like me...not like hate, but like she prefer to hang out with the friends who came at the same time as her because she said I am are so Western, she said you are so Australian. Why, I don't know, you just come here four years and I feel not really the same topic with you. He said you can not blame this one because it's culture shock, it's a culture shock, and he say I think at the beginning you have this same performance, this behaviour as these students who one or two years came to hear. And I think yeah probably, that's a problem.

R So, it must become I problem....I mean your language skills. I know you've had a problem with your IELTS which we will talk about, but your language skills are obviously very well developed, and you told me you worked in Vibe, you worked in the Menzies, you had to speak English. Has that helped you?

C That's really helped me. That's helped me communication skills. It's quite totally different from what the lecture told me, like communication skills. Exactly I forgot everything what lecture told me but I found it during my work, I found it oh, communication's like this, if you say this word, this sentence like this way like the receiver will feel better. Yeah, that's what I found. It's not the text book taught me.

R It's your experience has told you?

C Yeah, I think so.

R So that seems to be, when we talk about international students and how they struggle here, it seems to be the main reason is they are staying within their own cultural groups and the students who break out of those cultural groups do better. So what should universities.....is there a responsibility for the universities to help those students break out of their cultural groups.

C Yeah, I think so. And one thing I found, like, oh no, the five star university, the student from 5 star university, got much better language skill than the private or the four stars university, or three stars university.

R Which would you call the five stars?

C They....we got eight university group...do you know that? USW, Sydney University, U of Q, Melbourne University, very top one. I found that student in that environment is much better than the student in Macquarie, or the student in Holmes. Much better.

R Why is that?

C Probably because study I think. They um, I think is most restrict on assignment, like you should do the group assignment, we should communicate, and also probably the study phenomenon I think.

R I don't know what you mean by that?

C Study phenomenon?

R Yes, just explain that.

C Study phenomenon is when you enter to the library you can find a lot of students study there.

R Oh yeah

C That's make me feel like I want to study, I want to read, I want to talk to them. And the top university what I call they got mixed, not really had too much Chinese students, they also got other international students to come in.

R And that influences the environment?

C That's really influenced. And also I found my classmate had very good English skills.

R And that brings you on?

C Yeah, they got very good communication, they got good spoken English when they answer lecturer's question.

R And are they say more willing to participate then at say Macquarie?

C I think so, because Macquarie got too much Chinese students. They are just concentrate on how to pass the exam. Because it's very hard, very very hard. I heard from a lot of friends they say that it's very hard and they have a lot of Chinese students and they even

don't need to speak English. Like a large lecture got more than 100 or200 people just stay in one room they don't need to speak English.
R But what's the university's responsibility there. That's I mean that's what my PHD is about, it's about what we can do as universities, to make the experience of international students better . In your view, what should universities be doing to make the experience better. Is there anything, or is it just the students' responsibility?
C I think USW is doing good. They have Chinese students' community and always have some activity to bring, to invite students to come and usually the leader of this community, they have very good spoken skill.
R So they're Chinese?
C Yeah, they're Chinese. They're not born here. Probably because they have very Western friends they can lead the group to have that activity. We should let more some like some students they don't like social activities, should let this kind of people know and bring them together.
R And that doesn't happen in Macquarie, say?
C Macquarie? I don't know. Because I am not really in Macquarie University. But a lot of friends of me...of mine....Macquarie university student I don't think they do very good spoken English
R Because they don't have enough of those activities led by ... not encouraged to participate.
C The position is also important, of the campus. Macquarie is very far away to city. TYhey stay in the corner and they only got one shopping centre nearby and they all the staff in the shopping centre is Chinese. Eastwood is the suburb. Chinese people suburb. So they study in Macquarie and they went to Eastwood for shopping and they went to shopping centre they all speak Chinese.
R So they've just translated from one Chinese environment to another.
C Yeah, so like in Sydney University and USW we are near city we should go past city, or we live not like in Macquarie, not live in the corner, we all live where we should travelling and we should talk to other people. I think the position is something is problem.
Because I do find a lot of classmate in University of New South Wales, they do really really good. Language, spoken language, much better than me. Because they sounds like they was born here. One of my friends he stay in the homestay since he came here, he got a very beautiful English accent.
R So he stays with a Western family.
C Yeah, more than five years.
R OK so he's really polished his language skills by living in an English environment.
C Yeah, I think this one is also important.....also the government can do because a lot of Chinese children they came to Australia and they stay with the Western family but they cannot feel warm, they want to move out with their friends, so once they are 18 years out they want to move out with Chinese friends they can feel much better adopt into this family I think probably they got
Get more good spoken English skill.
R So that's really a government responsibility? To make sure homestay families actually take on the international student as a family member, instead of just earning income.
C Do you know Nash?
R Yes, Wu Nash.
C He's very famous og student in Australia.
R Is he? What's he famous for ?
C He's stay with the homestay for more than 4 years, he got ABC accent. A lot of people think he's ABC. He's graduated from Macquarie university and he was doing master degree in USW and he back to Macquarie doing owners....
R owners?
C honours.
R honours – sorry.

C Honours. And now he back to China for the work. He didn't get the PR. He does some want to apply. He already back for work. In Hangzhou.
R In Hangzhou?
C Yeah, I think it's a great career for him.
R Yeah, I remember him, he was just a little bit ahead of you. I think Fin taught Wu Nash.
C Wu Nash, yeah And do you know Jason in Class 1?
R No. Jason.
C Jason, yeah, he so graduated from Macquarie University and also back to Macquarie to do honours.
R OK No I don't know. I know Fisher, do you remember him?
C I remember but I don't know what's going on with him.
R OK well he contacted Fin just a few weeks ago. He's got PR and he's working at Griffith University. Yeah, he did his degree, he got his undergrad degree and his masters degree, and he's doing a cadetship and some work and so he's working in international relations, so he'll go back to China and help Chinese students come to Australia.
C. Wow, that's great.
R So maybe that's sort of the thing that Griffith's doing to help international students.
C Yeah we also do have excellent overseas, international students here. But what we are talking about is that part, that weak part, with students that needs help. It needs to be improved.
R And I think what we are talking about is these people we've just talked about are the ones who've done a foundation program and they have learned a little bit about the culture before they've arrived. Does that help?
C Yes, that helps. That's helpful, cos like ah, we made a lot of friends in foundation.
R But it was also very much a focus of the teaching that we wanted the students to understand what it was going to be like when they came to Australia.

C Year, exactly you told me a lot of things about Australia....before I came, but I can not remember a lot. But when I came here, when I encountered to ... encounter this issue, when I face this, that's Robyn was told me.
R So it makes sense when you experience it.
C Yeah it makes sense. And you told , you told me fish and chips, I can't understand, what's fish and chips put together, you say that's a very common meal for Australian people and I can't understand. All came to my mind is burger and when I came to Australia, oh that's true, fish and chips everywhere. That's the culture thing – you told me before and sometimes because the memory things, but when I really need to face it, I all memorised.
R Yeah, those things come back. That was very much a focus of what we were trying to do with the students in that one year. Is to just expose them to a little bit of what it would be like and I do think when students have that it makes it a bit easier for them when they come. If I were going back now I would be saying to students, find friends, find western friends, don't stay in your own....
C I think so, I think so. I have a lot of regrets I think. I didn't experience any home stay, I came here Anna found a house for me already I didn't experience any home stay. If I can get home stay I think I will keep it on and get much better spoken English and also I really regret to change the school but sometimes I also gain something. I also gain something. If I didn't change from Macquarie to other school I don't think my spoken English will should be like this.
R Because you had that hospitality experience?
C Yeah, Hospitality College is really good college – I like it. And also I regret to quit that college if I keep doing the college I think I also I got much much growth than....cos they all have western students there, so you have to speak English.
R I remember you saying that. You also said one of your aims was to get pr. And that hasn't happened for you. Just talk to me on the tape what happened there.

C At that time I think it should say, from this years until now people always at their mind said after I graduate I can get pr....that's what....
R Who said that?
C That's what we all think, like international students what they think, but, and it was true in ... maybe two years before, or from the previous international students or Chinese students came to, came to here, at that time get PR was very easy. At exactly as they graduate at accounting, they get PR. But it's totally changed this year on July. It exactly graduately (gradually) change, it had a big change in July so it's quite hard for me to apply for it. But um....
R: Even thought you have a master degree?
C: Even though I have a master degree, they got no difference between bachelor or master degrees. But it's ok for me. I think whole, the meaning for my whole life is not to get, to stand on myself said hey I am a citizen of Australia, that's not the real meaning to my life.
R No, but do you have a sense that it's been a bit unfair, that you came with an expectation that you would get it.
C Yeah, I think it's it's really unfair to the students who came at the same like me and I'm still can sustain this result, because my family didn't really expect for that result. You know for some family they are, were very poor in China and they borrowed all the money from their relatives and their friends to offer this child one of this study opportunity overseas and finally he or she cannot get pr to stay here to change the family's life. it's really killed their family's hope because they don't have any back you know, backward , back china, so they don't haverelationship, they don't a strong background to support their society or their life.

R So they came here with borrowed money to get pr to improve their family's life and it hasn't....
C for this kind of student for this kind of person I think they will want to get this purpose, I think very extremely...
R And so thinking back on this PR although you said in the beginning it was an aim but not the only aim, and now knowing you don't have pr, do you regret coming to Australia
C No....
R No? You still feel you got a lot from it.
C No, I still got a lot of experience which I cannot get from anywhere in the world and this is the place which I spent my young life here which I got a lot of memories here and also the first aim for me to come here to study is to open my mind, is to horizon ...not get pr.
R And so now you are going home, and we started and I started by asking you how you feel . How do you feel now about this adventure that you've had. These 5 years here and now you are going back to China. What are your feelings? Describe them to me.
C I feel a little bit sad because I have to leave because I love Sydney so much and I ...the upset things like for me is like probably I cannot drive like now, I cannot shopping like now after I leave and another feeling is I feel excited because I need to start a new way of my life so it's like half sad half happy. And so if I say I can go, I can leave Australia without any memory, without any missing that's not true, I will miss Australia for ever, I will miss the place I lived, also the friends who companied me these years. This is the place I grew up, this is the place that told me a lot of things here. I really like Sydney, I really like Australia but Australian doesn't accept me to be a resident here so that's so I can change. But doesn't matter, the planet is just so small, we can also travelling back to Australia if I want, I just can apply for the tourism visa, that's ok because I think my cultural background is from mainland, I think this one is very important for me, or for my family. My dad said if you stay in Australia but you not Australian exactly, always live in the edge of the society, that's what they what they my family want to see, not really the how to say it, the main trends in the society, stay on the edge of society, so my family want me to back china to start my own career, that's my purpose. Doesn't matter. I think it has a little bit pity but I don't think it influence my whole life.

Interview 3: Alice

R So Alice, it's been what? 13 months, 12 months since we talked last time?

A Yes

R Yep. And you had your last exam for the term today?

A Yes

R Alright, tell me what you have been doing in the last few months.

A For the last 12 months I get into my master degree, and I doing the Finance, and it's a little bit different from what I have done for the Bachelor. For the Bachelor I am doing the accounting and now I am doing the Finance and my feeling is like more academically and more difficult and I feel, I feeling the different ways from Master education with the bachelor education because the lecturers – cos actually we don't have any tutorials for our Master lectures and the lectures only take 3 hours, lectures for us and they don't mention a lot about some basical (basic) points or like some commerce or comments about this course. They assume you know, have a knowledge about this course already. This course be hard because in my bachelor degree I done accounting. Probably I did some part of the Finance knowledges but not enough for the Master degree. That's why I feel stress for that and why I stop my part-time job and I just pay all attention to my Master degrees. Yep.

R That's a good thing to do. Just for the tape, you did your undergraduate degree in accounting at what University?

A At Holmes Institution.

R Yep, so a private university?

A Yeah, a private university.

R And that was good?

A Yeah, I feel that was good because actually for Holmes degree I got an average higher mark, a really high average mark for that degree.

R What was your grade point average?

A It was about 7 ....78 per cent...in average. Like whole course.

R Congratulations. That's terrific. That's distinction

A Yeah, thank you.

R That's marvellous.

A And that's why I can get an offer from USW. University for the Master of Finance Analysis because this one is a required like professional level to enter into, this require a minimum 75 probably minimum 75 average for your bachelor degrees.

R So you had to have that higher academic level?

A Yeah, higher academic level.

R Before you could get into the University of New South Wales. And when did you start there?

A I started there at ah, February of this year (2011).

R February? So you've done this semester?

A Actually I have done two semesters. It's just because I feel the Finance is a bigger more difficult. That's why I didn't do the full time. I normally take the 3, 3 and 2. And this way is better for me to control all the things.

R So you need to do eight subjects? Three in the first semester, three in the second.....

A Yeah, three in the first semester, three in the second and two for the last.

R That's very sensible. And you passed all your subjects so far?

A Yeah, so far but today I just finish one. Hopefully I will pass all of them.

R OK that's good. So will you do a summer semester or will you study for first semester next year?

A I will study for the first semester for next year (2012) because a couple of subjects are not open for summer semester, that's why I wanna to do like.

Break to answer door knock.

Part two:

R There we go, we're recording again. So, we were talking about your last two subjects. And so you will do them first semester next year (2012). What's the plan after that?

A Ah, actually, the plan like, I got one more semester to go, is only two subjects left. And during this summer I/m going to back to my country to see what the job opportunities, to see how's my career going, and to see how is the financial industry, find out the finance industry in is China, and probably I want to see what cities I am going to work for in after my graduation. Yeah, and also I want to see the current situation of conditions of Chinese.. How to say Chinese environment.

R So you want to assess if it's a good place for your career. So will you apply for permanent residence before you go back?

A I am considering because the immigrations points is always changed and for my age is not reached , is not enough for the highest points yet.

R What age is that?

A Should be next year I should be okay for that. After my birthday because you require 25 years old get like 30 points for the highest one. I am considering if she.....should be end of next year if I get in 25 years old and I got enough points and I will try ELTS and if I can do that, I will try that. But I don't want to put this one, put too much stress on this one. It's because I like got my boyfriend and he's like planning going back to China and he's got sort of careers already and that's why I am considering probably we are going back together.

R OK so you won't apply at the moment but you'll consider it when you turn 25.

A Yeah

R When do you turn 25?

A October

R October 2012?

A Yes.

R Alright so you're 23, 24 now

A Yeah.

R So another year and then you'll do another IELTS test.

A Yeah another IELTS Actually I already done one, but I only got a 6.5

R 6.5? When did you do that one?

A Um, I think this should be February as well. Yeah beginning of the semester. Yeah, and that is why currently I'm in the bridging visa of the temporary registration.

R Alright, so how long will your bridging visa last?

A I have applied for a long time I think. It's over like eight months or nine months. But the temporary visa allow me stay here like 16 months. But the bridging is really long time.

R I mean, there're been a lot of changes haven't there to migration, to permanent residence, and what have you. How does that affect you? How do you feel about that?

A For my feelings, is like..it's...I just feel governments doesn't like so many overseas staying in ***their*** place. That's one of my first feeling about that. That's why they start to change the migration laws to send these guys study here back to they place after they graduation. That's what I afraid as an overseas student here. And the other thing I think is keep to keep to increase the requirements for us, and those requirements not really consistent with the ability you working here or the like socialisation, it's kinda not like a fair assessment, like all the peoples who wants to get the permanent residence. That's what I am thinking. So that's why I probably I might give up for, to go to the permanent. Even if I get the permanent resident I still need to stay here for like 3 years, and c then considering if I get the citizen. I feel it's really long term ....it's at least five or six years .to get to the end of this one. But I don't think I get something from here. Cos during this time I like 20 years old to 30 years old is like the best moment for us. We have to do for our career. To do more things than this one.

R Where do you think your career opportunities are the best, here or in China? Or somewhere else in the world?

A Currently I think China is better than for here. Because since I'm working for like even the part time full time and casual jobs in here, probably I didn't probably get into the

Australian employment marketing, probably it's like part time or casual job, but I feel it is a difference because of the nationality.
R There is a difference?
A There is a difference. Probably because of the language, like who speak English as a mother tongue, but secondly probably some people have some discrimination probably, I'm not sure. But you can feel the difference.
R You've experienced that?
A Yeah, because I was working for the hotel for my diploma and I'm doing the hospital management and I'm getting to the Sheraton for two years, but actually once like the improvement, the improvement opportunities come out for the students like us, I have entered into sort of interviews like that. But they don't really like accept you. Probably the language problem or the visa problem – I don't know – but they didn't actually tell me why I didn't pass the interview. I don't think that's good for staff who wants to get a promotion in your place. You should say, you should clarify, probably because of this problem or that problem, we can't like, apply to this a position right now but they don't. I don't know.
R They don't.
A I don't feel good with that way because they probably I think (if) we communicate in the same language probably it's more comfortable to say something. And I think one of the things it's the background, the cultural background. Cos you born in different place and the people see someone who's come from different culture probably they don't open to say everything. Probably they feel probably they think your culture has something like some conflicts between them.
R But surely in the hospitality industry, having someone with other languages, and other culture, should be helpful. It should be positive. It shouldn't be a negative. To say here's someone who's a fluent Mandarin speaker who understands and so many of our customers are Chinese – this is a great person to have on our staff.
A Yeah, that's what I think... But it's like yeah, they will keep this type of staff just on the ground floor, not getting to management. That's what they think. That's what I think from my research or my experience. Like my hotel, Sheraton or Four Seasons, the management is all Kiwis
R All?
A They say Kiwis....New Zealanders or Australians
R But not other nationalities?
A Or probably come some European countries. That's how they construct the system.
R So the management stays western, although they have multicultural front office?
A The front office is multicultural. I don't feel this is good, because ...what I think I think if I get back to china I am going to treat the same as others,. I think I got the like overseas experience is kinda of like the language competitive advantage ....than ours/...but still the competition in China is huge.
R Sure, but still, what have you got? You've got a Diploma of Hospitality
A Yeah, and I done my Bachelor of Accounting, and a Master in Financial Analysis
R So, that combined with fluent English and fluent Mandarin gives you a great advantage surely.
A Hopefully. Laughs....But I don't know. But after I did the IELETS test I don't feel that confident. I think I can get 7. But it's not.
R Tell me about the IELTS test. Do you think it's a fair test?
A I don't really think. It's because the equipment is not even good as China. Because I did the IELTS test in, where is it, north Sydney university. They don't have like individual ....like, what'... R: Headphones?
A Yeah, headphones for everyone.
R What, for the listening test?

A. Year, for the listening test. And the whole classroom is like boardroom. They got like around 300 students in one room and doing the listening. And I remember my seat was in the

back line and the listening test is starting at early in the morning. Yeah. Because they get thirty....like 300 students get into room individually like they have to check your ID everything... I think my number is 37 because I went there very earlier that day and I stay there for another until the listening test start, like the whole test start. And I can't go to the toilet during this time. And I think like, what's going on '. You can't eat anything. You can't go to the toilet. Like 7.30 in the morning you stay there until like 9 o'clock they start the test. But they have to, they say they have to with all the students come into the room but you can't do anything.

R And so that influences how well you do. If you feel uncomfortable.

A Yeah. I was confidence with my listening. But for my writing I only got a 6.5 and others are 7 and just listening I got a 6. It was like zero point five before I come here, I did a 5.5 in average. That was an academic one. And this is for the general one. And I feel like, 'what's gone wrong with me'.

R It's the test.

A Yeah, like currently like migration require us to do like average like 8 or 7, I think it is 8 now. Should be 8. Not average, single. Everyone is 8.

R Maybe

A yeah, because I thought they increased the IELTS requirements, that's all.

R OK, I didn't think it was 8.

A Is it? I think probably it's because of my age and not reaching the required age and probably it's going to be 7 until I turn 25. And I think they change a lot. Cos me and my boyfriend, we thought we can immigrate together for the extra five points because of your partner but now they change as well because they require partner got like average 7 as well.

R And your partner doesn't?

A And it doesn't make any sense like to change the requirement for two people get a 7. Because the reason for us didn't get enough points is because the IELTS is not average 7. So....

R Do you think it's fair? I don't really feel so (hesitantly). But, what for us, it's like we are overseas students, we can't control how the Australian education or the government, how they doing, how they set the laws. Probably they protect their own citizens or sort of ...other things. But I think from my point of view and from what we see a lot of overseas students start to (go) back to China, a lot of them. Even from my friends. ....all of them.....Christina's going home. Yeah. And here the, I feel it's not...like for those overseas students, they used to be the part-time worker, casual worker for them, and for like low payment. Always they a get a lower payment than the others. But for currently, those job is not enough, ah, like labours to do that now. I think this kind of problem is because too many students just going overseas now.

R: So that's going to have an impact on the economy?

A: Yeah, I think so. That's what I think. And for the, like, I think for the students, they are bring a lot to here. Even like my parents they just came to Sydney like in July, in June to July for travelling. Like this is kinda like, contribution to the hospitality industry for Australia. Of course they shopping a lot here. I think like all students will bring their parents. It's a lot. And the other thing probably like currently think like, too many Chinese student here so the Mandarin is not like a competitive advantage in employment. You can speak Mandarin, they require Cantonese, Mandarin and even some Japanese or some sort of things like that. But normally Cantonese or Mandarin.

R Just coming back to the migration for a moment. One of the students that I've interviewed said that when they first came here it was almost certain that if you got your undergrad degree and IELTS 6 you could get PR.

A Yeah.

R Was that your understanding?

A Yeah, that was my understanding as well.

R And now it's all changed?

A Yeah, everything's changed.

R What do you say to the government about that?

A Um....
R Do you think the government's fair?
A It's not fair. (emphatic). Like, I think they was putting the migration as a trick.
R As a trick?
A As a trick. For the students to come. To push the economic up. Because I know the Australian Government earn a lot from the oversea students from like (struggles with word) daily expenses, and also especially the tuitions, that's a huge amount for them. Yeah. But now, they change the migrations' rules but they extend the like.... they extend the visa. Its means you can get a longer visa when you apply, apply for the ..... Because formerly when I apply for the Bachelor is only 3 like 3 years visa. Now they can get like a longer or they can reduce the requirements for the visas. I don't know, I don't understand what does this work....is because still??? students to get the education to back to their country. Is that what they want?
R But giving them some opportunity to work here before they go back but.
A Yeah, but it's not long enough because a year, for me, I feel for a year like 16 months is not enough for the experience. Cos at this if you searching, if like do the interview you looking for the job you stay like two or three months. That's when you lucky. But if you not, you probably spend more than that time. After you working probably twelve months or ten months then you have to go back to China. And the employers won't allow these people to ???, like organisation, and I trained her well and she went home.
R So from an employment point of view, employers won't be interested.
A Yeah, like I went for an interview like three months ago, to the Cash Stop....it's a kinda....do you know the Cash Stop?
R No
A They are doing ...It's a kind of financial organisation. They are doing the personal loans, car loans, this kind of things and I went interview, they asked me all the questions. Ok, pass, pass, pass, pass. And the end one, 'what's your visa current visa.' And I say, 'I'm on bridging visa.. what, to PR or permanent or temporary. And I say I'm TR (temporary resident) and in the bridging to TR
R: TR
A TR is the temporary. And they didn't say anything but I can see the difference, how they feel. Is like and I didn't successful for that. And I think it's a kind of reason. Because the branch manager, he was saying, he was saying my resume is really good and all my experience is really consistent with the position.
R Just get to the visa and....?
A Yeah, cos if you are TR just stay here for 16 months and you go. That's what they think. Actually if I am an employer, what am I going to concern about? That's all.
R Yeah, of course.
A We can't do anything. But also for the accounting student, they provide the professional year. I heard a comments from that, they just paying the money for an extra five points.
R So students are ...how do you mean, paying the money?
A They are saying it doesn't actually give you anything. The professional year takes like around twelve months. And only do once a week.
R That's at university? Or an employer? Where do you do the professional year?
A It's just some institution that opened that. And just the end of 3 months they are going to bring you to some employers and do the interview, and 90 percent of you are going to be a success but for those employer, the quality is not good.
R OK so you work with their employees but the quality is not good, and it's just to get the extra five points, and you pay for that?
A Yeah. I think it's a lot. A couple of my friends, they doing that.
R Do you know how much it is?
A I think it should (could) be more than um, ten thousand?
R Wow!

A I think it should (could) be more than that. Patty should know exactly because she's working for the agent.
Both laugh
R Lets just come back to your Australian education. I mean, can you estimate the total cost of your education so far. Just in fees
A For fees...for my master probably I can account for the master is better. The master is really expensive because that's at the University of New South Wales. I think I paying for six hundred seventy five per credit, per credit. It means, each of my subject got six credit. So it means I paying $4,050 for one subject. And I got eight subject. That's roughly 32,000.
R That's a lot
A Yeah, a lot.
R And what about your under-grad degree?
A The undergrad degree....I think the average fee for each subject is $2000 I think.
R And you did how many subjects?
A We got to 24, I think.
R So there's another 48,000?
A Yes.
R And your diploma?
A Oh, it's including the diploma.
R Alright. Being perfectly honest
A laughs
R *Perfectly* honest. Do you think you got value for money?
A I think I am paying too much. Laughs again. Yeah it was good experience here and a good education environment sort of things is good.... It's better than China I have to say for that.....but....it doesn't cost that much. I feel. Because most of time, like you have to study by yourself and I don't feel the university give you sort of, so many, like enough assistance or help or the things you expect for you.
R What do you want from them, what do you expect from them? What are the sort of things that would help?
A I think as a student I would like my lecturers following up all the.....cos for my experience in the masters degree, I got three lecturers for one subject, and they don't communicate very well, I feel. It's because they bring their own materials, and some of them don't use the slides, some of them use the slides, and they don't inform us for that. And I can see in the difference, the different way they like teaching, they are teaching, they are saying .....like some of them exactly following the materials they giving, and some of them not. And just writing on the board. I think it's kind of difficult. I don't have any structures following what are you saying.
R Is that particularly difficult because you are doing it in a second language?
A Yeah. I am doing a second language and also it's like, for the finance, you can't like just jump. I just feel he is just jumping the chapters. And like, one of my feelings is like, sort of lectures we got like 50 slides to do, it won't be efficient. Like it's impossible for you to do the 50 slides like during maybe 2 hours. It's hard. And you won't be able to explain clearly. But when we ask for this, they just saying this is basical (basic). Normally the feedbacks, this is, this is what you ...we assume you already know this. We don't have time to explain this, and for like big university, it's hard to make appointment with your lecturers or tutors to explain all the questions. Actually we got a lot of questions, but we won't get any, like enough ....Like I don't feel we get enough assistance of help. Even I ask. I did an appointment with my lecturers, with one of my lecturers, and they say I won't be staying with more than half hours, just bring the core things for you, that you want to know. And I thinking (half laughs), 'no, my question is going to be more than for half hours.' Yeah, they say this is like, he say,' I got my schedule as well. If I spend like more than this with you, the next student is going to be like, complain, or something'.... I don't know...laughs.
R So you need more assistance? The University needs to provide more?

A Yeah, the university need to provide more since we paying so...like we pay, actually we pay really high. Especially for the big university. I think for the big university the only good things is that they got all good all the equipments, they got all the good computers like everything. But like the human resource assistance is not enough for the students. I think a lot of like overseas students they got this problem.
R What do you....I mean what do you do about that? Do you just keep on struggling through?

A Cos normally I got help from my classmate or probably or my friend who has done this subject because. They got some experience. Or I am talking with my friend who has done a similar subject or similar topics. Cos the discussion like understand more, make me understand more about the subject, but like I don't actually know do I really get this point. This is what I feel.
R In your masters program, you don't actually have tutorials?
A Yeah, we don't have tutorials, just three hours lectures.
R So do you need discussion groups? What can universities ...what could the university have done to make it better? Better one on one consultation...but discussion groups? Or...you don't have that? Would that have helped?
A No, no discussion group and just nothing. I just feel like the lecturer doesn't have a lot of contacts. Is about doing the lectures for us. They just put all the materials on the Blackboards and you open it by yourself and he didn't says...even he, I think one of the lecturers was angry, getting too many emails from the *students*. Cos he was put on the Blackboards that this is the...the answer is 'this' just do not email me about this one again. That's what their to attitude to the students (disbelieving).
R That's almost a Chinese attitude isn't it? The teacher will tell you what it is. Don't question it.
A Yeah, yeah. I don't feel....and the things I feel for my master, the structure of the class isn't.... I don't feel that is good. Because they don't have tutorial time, but they still like tutoring some questions within the class. But after 50 slides straight away to get into the questions, we don't even have time to read anything. How can we like get an understand of that?
R So how do you get an understanding?
A Just go back and read again, read everything again. Read the textbooks. The textbooks is really help for us. The only thing can help for us. Just keep reading. Cos I finding if you read it once you can't understand, then go to two times, three times. I can get more understanding about that. That's what I am feeling for the masters. That's difficult (rueful).
R That's very difficult.
R I am hearing that you need more help but the universities aren't providing it. At any time does the university contact the overseas students to say' how are you doing' what can we do to help you. What sort of contact do you have from the university? Not the lecturers but from the administration to make sure you are doing okay.
A Pauses .... I don't think...I think the only contacts is after all the lectures, after 12 lectures done, you get like survey like to assess, assign your lecturers.
R Ok what they call TEVALS....tertiary evaluations.
A Yeah, just click, click, click.
R And do they come to you individually to say, 'Alice how are you going?'
A No, actually, never.
R Never?
A Never. It's because of probably they got too many students. It's one excuse they are going to say.
R OK. What can universities do though? How would it have been better for you?
A Pauses.... I think.....what I feel is they don't have enough lecturers. And the lecturers doing like, the students a lot, but actually the resources are not enough. Like especially the teaching resources.

R So the teachers are too thinly stretched. They don't have enough time to deal with you individually.
A Yeah, that's one of the reason. Cos with one, like sort of core subject, they got like three or four hundred students (sounding amazed). Yeah, you can't like one people doing so many students. One of my classes got more than one hundred, like roughly 200 students. Is only one lecturer one week, like ballroom, everyone sitting there. But the quality should (will) be low when you tutoring so many students.
R And how many of those students would be international?
A Oh, that's quite hard to say percentage right.
R What? More than half?
A Yeah, more than half. Even not from, even from other except China, even places like India.... Yeah, it's a lot. But still we want the big titles (prestige) of the university.
R I understand. Did you expect to get more help?
A Yes, we want, but it's just like um, it's just like now I feel I really feel uncomfortable to study by myself because that's what they this word this education is, and the way they teaching, you have to do a lot of things by yourself. This is what I thinking. Is a master supposed to be like this? Because I never done a master before other university. Because I also tell myself, oh the master is different from other degree because the lecturer don't give me that much help. Or that much material. It's up for you to do the subject.
R When you think back, again, thinking back to your Australian education, would you have been better off studying in China, given what you say? I mean, would you have got the same sort of thing out of a Chinese education?
A Mmmm, the ...still, I think it's still kind of different with the Chinese education. Especially the university. The reason I coming here for the university education is like here, you have to force yourself to study a lot, and of course you learn something even from study by yourself, but for currently Chinese universities they are not push you that much to do everything by yourself. And also the environment you don't need to dealing with anything like rent. Like I have to rent a room by myself, cooking by myself. They do everything for you. And you just stay there four years, spend your four years time in the university, and then you graduate and ask yourself, what did you learn?
That was always the answer from my friends in China. Yeah, I think the university education is really difference. Here I think they thought you are adult, you will learn, manage, control yourself and study and life and work everything.
R A lot of students....a lot of students fail, don't they?
A Yeah.
R It seems that what you are saying is that if you can manage yourself, you will do well. And if you can't, you won't.
A Mmmm, you won't.
R And you talked last time about your boyfriend, and how much he struggled.
A Yeah.
R And is he still struggling?
A He's getting better now. Yeah, he's getting better. Doing the masters at the University of....UTS. University of Technology?
R Sydney?
A Yeah. He's getting better now. It's because I think because now he know the way to study. How to study. He catching up all the lectures, all the materials like each weeks.
R But he's really struggled to this point. And I guess that's what I want to come to. He will have had your help as well.
A Mmmmm. Yes, sort of.
R But how about the students who don't have help. How do they manage? Do they manage? What do they do?
A Cos, yeah, from what I see from some of the students, they don't have a help. Probably half of them choose to give up. That's what I'm annoyed...that's what I..... And half of them probably like need to ask some friends, like to get some help from the university,

maximum help from the university, or some other ....and some other ways to get the help. And....

R What other ways, do you mean?

A Probably the part of student. I mean the part of students they are not really, probably they not really care what they learned, they care about what their exam is. They are just learning for the exams. The other ways is getting, like, getting extra materials for the reparation for the exams from previous term, like previous materials. But I don't know...I am not one of these students. Because I never trust others. (emphatically) I can't wait for others to help me for this subject. I can only do by myself.

R Because you want to learn, not just pass the exam. It's about learning.

A Yeah...and laughs. And I believe myself better than others.

R Yeah, but I just worry about the students who struggle, who feel they have to do that. Organisationally, shouldn't universities being providing more?

A Yeah. And I think the universities cannot think.... can not only think like how many students you want. You still need to be able to qualify. Will these students be able to do this subject or not. Concerned more about that and not just about how many students you will be get. This semester.

R So really, evaluate students to see if they have the capacity to do it?

A Yeah.

R You said before it was a trick, international education.

A laughs...a bit embarrassed

R Just expand on that for me. It's an interesting point of view.

A Yeah, because um we always saying about that. It's like, they are so many universities in the world want, like Australia, they speak English, they got European culture. So before I come here I got the choice to go Canada, or America, England, other universities. And one of the reasons like in 2007 to come to here is like the kind of benefits is to getting permanent residence from you after graduation. That's the one competitive advantage we can see compared to the other countries. That's one of the reasons we come to here. And for most of the students that's a major reasons. And after we study, they tell us you can't. We are going to increase our like, requirements. I don't think that's fair. And why I am saying this is a trick, is, you just want to get so many students come to here to stronger your economic in paying a lot in your countries, and then you didn't like, like paid back to them, your kind of promise. That's what I think. Cos I think for all education Asian in Chinese they are still using the permanent residence as one of the main points when they do the advertising for the Australian universities.

R So that's the carrot to bring people here. But the government's not living up to its promise.

A Yeah. I think if like government's going to increase the requirements probably they should give a gap for students already promised.

R so those students who came here under the old requirements should be allowed to apply under that?

A Allowed...apply. Not like each single years, even I still in the bridging visa, I already in the new. That's unfair, that's really unfair. Because one of my friends, she's applying the pr for a year already. They like rearranged the grouping because of the assessment of group 1 to group 5, so she goes for another 2 years, probably. That's really unfair.

R And do you use an immigration agent for your visa applications?

A The first time, but after that I just do the e-visa online.

R Can I just ask you, just to finish up, what would you recommend if you went back to China and someone said to you, I am thinking of studying for a degree in Australia? What would you say to them?

A Actually my brother's just came. He's doing a ...I was still saying like, if you get a ....first the condition if the family got enough wealth for you to study here and stay here. I think the good thing for kids you got a chance like gain the working experience during your

study. And the other thing like if you want to improve your English, of course improve your second language, and the third thing is you will be able to control yourself. I think that's the three major conditions if you want to come to Australia to study, because you are here by yourself. You have to know what you want to get and what you are going to do. If you don't control yourself you are going fail like and paying like paying the tuition for redoing. That's not good thing I think. He's going to waste of your time

R Do you think it's still a good country to come to, even despite the PR problems?

A Interrupts .....Yeah

R Is it still worth coming here for your education?

A Yeah, still good. But now is becoming more like internationally, because is becoming multicultural. The other thing this year is the multi-culture. It's not like a strong sense of discrimination. Like probably for some countries, they are a lot of original citizens. They don't like other people come to their place.

R But Australia's not like that?

A yeah, not like that. Actually, the working experience in here is good. And opportunities. Cos you normally start from the bottom to up, yeah. But in China, if you like, if you getting into the bottom it won't be linked to the top.

R Unless you have guong xi (relationships).

Both laugh

A Yeah! Yeah!

R There was one other thing I wanted to ask you. When we talked...mostly we were talking about your master's degree and your study there and the help there. But you also studied in a private institute, in a private university....Holmes. Did you get any more help there, or was there any difference between the private and the public university? What was your experience of Holmes, in terms of helping overseas students?

A Ah, for my bachelor degree the first feeling at least for one subject is that there is not that many students. We got a smaller class and the tutor, the tutors and lecturers were do, like, give us assistance more. And the other thing for Holmes that I think is good is that we can connect, like we can connect to administration levels. Because I have to talk to the dean once about some issues about my lecturers because she's not, because I was ... I think it was a .....I can't actually remember. I went with my classmate. It's just because the issues with that lecturer. But the dean can give us the replies to us and the communication, and ask how she (the lecturer) was after that. I think that's quite good things. We can get to the higher levels. Oh yeah, I remember. It was my assignment. I upload my assignment through the computer, computer base, but I don't know what happened with my lecturer's system. In my screen it said it successful upload but in his screen, he can't see anything and he's saying you are not upload your file, and I say ok I will re-upload another to you, and I did re- upload and the system saying successful as well but he received it this time, but opened the file. He say, 'it's nothing. Something wrong with your file'. And I don't know what's wrong with the file and I keeping email him to deal with this problem, because this is like 20% of my graduation for this subject and he's didn't give me accurate reply for that. Because after that time, even you got, after like, they got like expiration for marks. After a week even like you upload your assignment to him, he's not going to mark it. And he's reply me this week, and I say no, it's not. It's probably the system's problem not my problem. Could you please contact to the IT department because I already sent an email to them but they didn't apply (reply). Yeah, and he said you should to see the IT Department. And I went to the university and see the IT department. The IT Department say, you should go back to your lecturer. It's like they are pushing me to each others. And I think 'no, because the due date is just a couple of days'. I think 'no, this is my thing, this is my subject.' And I actually did this work and I have to pass that, and should get a mark for that. I did the work for it. I went to just make an appointment with dean, and I went to him and say this problem, and straight away is solve. I think couple of days and my points come out, and the lecturer reply, say, 'I am not going to punish you by anything'. Like probably the system recording I'm late uploading, but actually I'm not.

R Just the system?

A Yeah, just the re-upload.
R But there was no penalty.
A Yeah, no penalty. I think that's the good thing for the private or small university can provide for you. For the large university, I don't think.....
R It's too impersonal?
A Yeah, too impersonal. I think a couple of problems that happen just in this term, just for one subject, we are doing online quiz, and a lot of the students are showing ...after the quiz, the marks should come out straight away but some student don't get that, the mark on the graduate and they keeping emailing to the lecturer, and that's why he angry about that. Laughs. I already solve this problem and I check everything. Do not email me about this one. I don't know what's going on about that.
R That's because the teacher has too much to do and can't manage?
A Yeah. And he have to check individually everything, and that's too much for 100 students, 100 files. That's the different. And I think for the private, and also for the private institutions, even probably the quality, I can feel the quality of students not that good. Not as good as the big universities. Yeah. Because probably the entry requirements is low.
R Yeah. Do you have any final things you'd like to say about your experience here? You've been in Australia now for five...four? years?
A I think I'm still for even the permanent resident have some problems right now, but I'm still enjoying being here. Like even the diplomas and all the degrees I did, I think I can be the one to control myself very well for the study, for the time management of the work. I did get several working experience before I go back to my countries. Hopefully that's useful for my future career.
R Thank you.
A Thank you.

Final interview, Penny.

R OK, so we are recording, and this is our final interview, and it's 10 November. And I'm talking to Penny.

P Thank you

R Yes, thank you. So, it's been a long time hasn't it since 2005 since you enrolled in Lang Fang. And you've come a very long way. It's been just over a year since I interviewed you last. Tell me what you have been doing in the last 12 months.

P Last 12 months? I finished my master degree. Yeah, it's for eight months, it's very short.

R Yes

P So when I finished my ah, the master degree I need to um take the IELTS test since got the PR application so currently I have got my PR.

R Congratulations

P Thank you....laughs. And during this year I also to work part-time.

R OK so I'll come back to your work in a minute. But you did your undergraduate degree. What was your undergraduate?

P Bachelor of Commerce in Macquarie University.

R Bachelor of Commerce ... and then you did your Masters.

P Yep, New England University.

R New England?

P Yes, it's a Master of Business.

R OK and did you do that here in Sydney.

P Yeah, in Sydney, in Sydney Campus.

R Alright and a Master of Business. Ok and that was an eight month course. That's very quick.

P Yes, because this course is just eight subjects, and this school have three semesters in one year so just eight months I can get.

R OK that's good .... was that hard?

P Is not very hard because when I graduated from Macquarie some knowledge I have to learn it so when I go to my Master degree some knowledge is repeat so that is fine.

R OK. And then did an IELTS test. When was that?

P Aahhmmm the score?

R No when, when did you do it?

P Before the June, May once and June 12th.

R OK, and what was your score?

P Six, overall six

R Overall, six? OK. And since then, you got your PR, when did you put your application in for PR?

P I put my application on 24th June and get PR on 10thof October, oh 17th October.

R So it was quite quick

P Yeah, just three months

R Because you put it in before the changes?

P Yeah

R So since then there've been some changes to PR? Tell me about the work you do first and then we'll talk about the PR

P You mean the difference?

R Well tell me about the job first, what sort of job you do you do first and then we'll talk about PR

P Now, I do the consultants and the admission officer at one education agent to help the overseas students find the school, to do the application for them, maybe the high school, master, bachelor and to help them to do some student visa

R And so, are they all Chinese....And that's a Chinese company?

P Yes a Chinese company, my boss is Chinese

R OK good....And you've been working there you told me for almost 2 years. And in that time.. have you noticed...do you have anything to do with students applying for PR once they finish their study.
P Ah actually my company just focus on the studies the students' study is not focus on PR
R But you understand there have been changes.
P Yes all the policy we know but we not normally to do this.
R OK I guess what I am talking about is it would make a difference when you are talking to students about coming here you would need to be aware of the policy on PR.
P Yeah, yeah
R OK, so what do you understand the changes have been to PR?
P Yeah, The major difference is point. Do you know the point policy? It's changed. Before the 1st of July in 2010....corrects...2011 the total point is 120 and you can use the master degree to get more 10 points (ten points more) if you get bachelor degree in Australia. Now is cannot to use the master degree to get another ten points. This is cancelled. And another major one is all the skills, the skills assessment is 55 points but before someone is 50 someone is 60.
R So depending on what your studies are do you mean? No matter what your studies are you just get 55 points, it's all the same.
P Not all the subjects, not all the major, just the checklist. All the major is 55. So correctly excepts the major you just can get 65 points it's okay. But another major is very difficulty one is IELTS. The IELTS overall needs to be 7, IELTS each subject is 7, even though the students get 7 maybe they need five more points, they need to get the NAATI? Do you know the NAATI? The translation
R What does that involve?
P They can do study one of the diploma study to get the exam for NAATI exam just for translating from Chinese to English or Japanese to English or Japanese to Chinese that is fine but you need to get the certificate you can to do this job, they can get the five more points. Or you can study the professional year. Or you can the working experience relating to your major. So now the policy is very difficult.
R So I've heard the professional year, some students say that he professional year is a way for organisations to get more money. That you pay to do a professional year, but it's just more money. Do you agree with that or do you think the professional year is helpful?
P The professional year is just one week, this is ten months course. One week you just get one day to study and the study is, ah, includes ah, skills to communicate with people in company, how to write the resume, and you can get a three months, ah, ...pauses....what's that?...working experience, you can find this...internship, just like this. It's not very useful, but expense is very ....like 11 thousand. Eleven, twelve, thirteen thousand. Depends on the school.
R And so you get another five points though towards your migration. So really, you have to have IELTS 7, a degree, plus either work experience, translation diploma or the professional year.
P And it's an 8. If your 8 is overall is 25 or 30 I forget, you can get some points.
R And if you are younger than that you need more points?
P If you are younger you need five more points.
R Five more points. You must be relieved that you got your application in before the change?
P Yep.
R OK someone else has said to me too that they think the government has been quite unfair because the students who came, some students who came at the same time as you, didn't finish their studies so they couldn't get their application in and one student described it as a trick, that the government promises, almost promises you pr and then you don't get it. What do you think of that? Do you think it's fair that for the government to change?
P Aahhh (long pause). I don't know, because I think it depends. Just like me and our, the classmates same as me. If they graduate earlier, maybe they get the PR but sometimes

when they graduate bachelor's degree, they get two years .... ah, break to get some job or as well, so they cannot get PR correctly. So I think the policy is always changed in Australia. This is, ah, policy in Australia, I cannot judge anything .

R Do you think it's fair, though? To keep on changing the policy?

P I think it's unfair for overseas students but fair for the citizen.

R No I mean for overseas students; my concern is for overseas students

P Yep. I think when students come to Australia the major reason is can get the PR. But currently they cannot. So I think most students, they think it is unfair.

R Is that going to affect the number of students who come here to Australia?

P What's you mean?

R Well, if you're doing recruiting in China, and students know now it's going to be very difficult to get PR will they continue to come here or will they go other places?

P Currently the trading is other places, America and Canada. Because Canada has opened the PR policy so all students put there.

R So are you seeing a decline in the numbers who are coming here?

P It's decreased.

R Yeah?

P Because I doing this industry, so I know that in this year the students come to Australia is very very decreased.

R Is that to do though with the Australian dollar being so high? It's seen as a more expensive place to come? Or is it just about PR?

P I think the major reason is PR. Because you think in one China family puts huge money puts their students in Australia. After four or five years they need to come (go) back China . Maybe the month's wage is ten thousand so how long they can get this money like this so many students come Australia, the major reason is get Pr.

R So they can work here and send money home to China?

P Maybe, this is one reason. Because Australia is more peaceful than China.

R More peaceful?

P China is so...pause....quick. The tempo is quick. It's can not .....When I come Australia I think Australia life is so boring. I cannot play any place in the night. But now I come (go) back China I cannot suitable. It is so ...quick. I cannot to catch them.

R So you like the life here?

P mmmm.....recently I like Australia. laughs

R Well, that's good to know. (both laugh)

Let's talk about the cost of your Australian education. Can you just, thinking back, think how much your Australian education has cost? Your master's degree, your undergraduate degree.

P The total cost? Just the tuition fee or?

R Yes, the tuition fee.

Currently, in Macquarie one subject is $3000 so is 24 subjects is so is 72,000. Yeah. The master is almost, my university is very cheaper but normally is also 3,000 per subject so is 24 plus 72...is

R Nearly 100,000 dollars.

P So this is just the tuition fee.

R And other costs? What about other costs?

P The living costs? According to immigration's policy, is almost one student living Australia one year's living is 18 thousand....so four years in here is 72. So I spent 172 thousand dollars in Australia.

R That's a huge amount of money.

P Yep

R So how did you fund that education? I mean, has your family paid for that?

P Yeah, my family pays that.

R And what's their expectation now that they've invested 172 thousand into your education? What do they expect you to bring back from that?

P Uncertain.....high education knowledge....and get a difference experience than other person.
R Yeah
P And independent in Australia. /
R But will you send money back to your family in China? Do they need you to do that?
P No,no,no,no. I think this is different culture China and Australia, yep.
R Right. But a lot of students, their parents borrow money so they can send one student. I know one student , another of my students in the case study, they said that her family could afford for her to come here but she knows of other students their parents have borrowed money with expectation that the student would get pr and then...
P Transfer money?
R Yes, to help the family pay the loans back...but the student hasn't go PR. Have you heard of that happening?
P I think this is very low rate – it's not that high. Maybe just ah, five percent, ten per cent students/.
R OK, so most students who come here, their families can afford to send them here.
P Yeah
R OK that's good to know. Speaking very honestly, when you think about the cost, do you think it was worth it?
P Pauses....ah....sometimes I think, because now I get PR, I can come (go) back China to work, I will think if I come back to China in my city, one month, I um, I can get 5,000 RMB. This is a big amount in my city, this is a high wage. Even though I just one year I can get 60,000 RMB, so I need 10 or 20 years to get this money back. From this part I think it unworth?
R Not?
P I think is not balance for my cost.
R But if you work here?
P Yeah, if I can work here, if I can do some money transfer to China, that is worth, that is balanced. But normally I cannot ...
Both laugh
R Because it's expensive living here – and your salary goes on your living expenses?
P Yeah, but in this five years in Australia I have difference experience. Um, one week ago I see one blog, one message in my blog said the Australia the girls who live in Australia special for the overseas students, they also is woman they also is man.
R So , say that again. In your blog.....?
P Yes, this message means is girls in Australia ah, is girls also is boy, yeah because you need to like the woman washing the clothes, like you have need to find a boyfriend to do the woman's roles but you still, like me, I take a unit in Sydney, so I need to settle my own house. This is man's job, but I still can do – I still can do it.
R I see, you can do it.
P Yeah, in China I cannot do that ....and ah, it's very different.
R So you like that? You like the independence of that?
P It's very independent. Laughs.....
R Yes, very independent. A big change. It's very different. So, what would you say is the best thing to come out of your Australian education? The biggest thing?
P Pause ..... better for me?
R Yes, for you personally.
P Pause. The biggest thing? I cannot know
R The benefits then
P Another pause: The benefits? When I come Australia I think my English will be improved but I think is not.
Both laugh

R Why is that?
P I live with in my unit is all Chinese girl, my old classmates is all Chinese, so my English is not very improved. However my Chinese is decreased! Yeah! Some words I cannot write. I forgot (quite animated).
R Yeah, well, I suppose if you are not writing all the time. But you're working for a Chinese boss, and I guess you don't practise your English; you're dealing with Chinese students?

P Yeah, I dealing with Chinese students but I speak Chinese with my students but I need to speak English with the universities.
R Yeah of course. Alright, so you have a balance there.
P Yeah, have a balance there.
R OK so in terms of your English though, when you were at university in your undergraduate degree and in your masters, did you mix with many native English speakers or mostly Chinese?
P Most Chinese.
R Yeah? Do you think your university should have been helping you more with your English?
P Pause ....I think it is difficult for the university
R Because?
P Every year you are in one class, we almost (always) like to find Chinese classmates because it is easy to communicate. So I think the tutor is cannot to control for this.
R OK but I'm thinking one of the suggestions has been that universities pair students up with a native English speaker not just for.....
P Yeah that is good
R Would that have helped you?
P Yes is very helpful
R Did you make many English friends?
P Yeah because now I have bible study so I have some
R Bible study?
P Yeah so I have some Western people friends but not very large, just a few.
R Are they older people?
P They are older than me. About thirty, thirty five.
R And is that a church?
P Yeah, in church. And they are teaching me the bible in my home one week so I can speak English to them.
R How did you find that group?
P I just walking on the road, they find me. "Do you want to study the bible?"
R OK, oh that's odd, I've never heard of that before
Penny laughs
R And is that helpful? Helpful for your English?
P Yeah, because one week I need to do two hours of bible study. So that is good.
R So what type of group is that?
P Christian
R Yeah, but what group of the Christian faith? Do you know, is it Jehovah's Witnesses,
P Oh, is aahhh
R Morman?
P Ah, I don't know how to say English.
R Baptist, Catholic?
P I can check this (reaches for phone) Sorry....laughs
R That's okay, we'll come back to it. So, two hours. Of course the bible is written in old English so....
P mmm...

R OK that's great. Just thinking back and thinking about your studies again, you went to two universities; do you think you got enough help from the universities with your studies?

P No (emphatic shake of head)
R No?
P No, because ah, Macquarie I studied accounting but now I don't do the accountant so many knowledge I forgot.
R But when you were studying there, did Macquarie help you with special study groups, did it ever contact you to see you were doing okay, did it help you with your study?
P No!
R No?
P Emphatic shake of head. Nah!
R laughs...that's a shame
Both laugh
R So how did you get through?
P What?
R Did you just .....how did you manage? It must have been very difficult.
P I just go to the lecture, tutorial, and the study at home and then exam, to discuss with my friends, so that is fine.
R Would having a more formal program from the University, a discussion group that the university organised; would that have helped you more?
P I don't know....because I don't
R Because you didn't have it.
P Yeah. Both laugh.
R OK but did you feel you needed more?
P pause.....in my study period I don't want to find, I know this idea but I don't want to find this programs to help me , I know this idea, all the things I can choose, can settle by myself. So.....
R So you're very independent, you're an independent learner.
P yeah.
R Not everyone is, though. Some students struggle with independent learning.
P I help some students like this, they need to help, but their English is not very good. Even though go to the student centre, they can not to explain it very well. So the problem can not too settle.
R But how do they get entry to university if they can't communicate?
P I think some Chinese students can reading the book but cannot speak.
R OK so they can't really get help because they can't speak well enough to ask for help?
P Yep.
R That's very difficult for them isn't it? Very difficult.
P Yuh
R What about the University of New England. Did you get much help from the New England University?
P Laughs. Actually this master degree I not study very well. Because during my study I had to work. Part-time. So this master ...just for the purpose of this master is PR
R Yup
P Ten more points
R Yes
P So I don't learn any knowledge in this. I just pass the exam, it's okay.
R It's okay, you got through?
P Yuh.
R Alright, and you said it wasn't very difficult?
P No, it's very easy. LAUGHS
R OK. A lot of international students doing that course? And mostly doing it for PR?
P I don't know.

R OK. My research is about how universities can improve study in Australia for students. What are your thoughts on that? What could universities do to make it better for overseas students?
P (Not understanding the question). Which universities are better for overseas students?

R No, what they can do. All universities. What all universities can do to be making it easier for you? For the students who learn independently but also for the students who don't learn independently. What would you recommend that those universities could do?
P Ah, Like you say, you could let the teacher to find one China students to compare with the other countries they can improve their English and I think the student service should find some Chinese staff to find the Chinese students and the Japanese staff to find the Japanese students.
R OK so they need multicultural staff in the student services area. OK, so they don't have those?
P Some university have, but it's not almost (not most).
R Alright, the government has changed - keeps changing the rules and that's not fair, no-one thinks that's fair. At any time did the government contact you – after you got your visa, was there any contact or follow up from the government to see if you were doing okay or to see if you were managing your studies.
P No
R Do you see that as a government responsibility?
P long pause. Aahhh.I think in this state the government like the DIAC just to find the students' problems and cancel visas to come (go) back China, the students come back, so is not very helpful for students. But I think the responsibility is, ah, I don't know....long pause. But I think we spend lots of money in Australia. This is invest in Australia and in Australia have to get some benefit to us. They need to give me some back. Pause....Just like if you know the overseas students, how about the property is high
R The what is high?
P The house, I think overseas students they buy the house in Australia. If the policy is not changed maybe next two years no student coming, so all the economic in Australia I think will be down.
R So because of the property market it's going to be affected. OK that's a really serious implication from what's happening, obviously. Would you recommend....ok I know your job is to bring students here, but if some of your friends in China said 'oh we're thinking of going abroad to study'. What would you say to them?
P If they come Australia? I will tell them what's happens in Australia. If you come, this is difficult life compared with China. If you live in China, you can come back parents' home to get more comfortable but in Australia is cannot....is very difficult, so they need to choose which life they want. If they like the very comfortable life they need to stay in China and not come in Sydney. But if my family want to get PR I will suggest to them to another country. Because in this year Canada and America the education is good and they can get the PR. The policy is open. The money is same. Why they come Australia?
R Yeah, a good point.
P And in Canada, the policy is not always changed. Maybe ten years is same. So it's not like us always worried for the policy change.
R Tell me about the future for you now. You've got your degrees, you've got PR. Are you going to stay here and apply for citizenship do you think?
P I am not sure. Maybe I come (go) back, maybe in stay in Australia.
R Because you have to live here for two years now don't you to get citizenship?
P I think is just one year is okay because I have get in Sydney for five years so they can calculate in this period.
R Right, ok. So they take that into consideration. OK so you are going to work on here for a while. You are not going back to China just yet?

P Maybe, because I need to find one boyfriend and to discuss which country is better for us. If he think is better for China, I will come back. If we both want to stay in Australia, we will stay.
R OK so where's your boyfriend now?
P Laughs...I don't know!
R Oh, you don't have a boyfriend. OK alright, so you are going back to China to maybe find a partner there and make some decisions. How do you see your career now? Is your career better, will your career be better for having had this Australian education.
P my future career?
R Your career, your future career. Having had an Australian education, do you think your career is better than if you had stayed in China and got a Chinese degree?

P It doesn't matter if the money is okay
Both laugh
P I think all the job I can do if the salary is high.
R OK. And you think your Australian education will get you a high salary job?
P I don't know. Because my friends say if you get a master degree in Australia it's cannot difficult to find a job than if you just get a bachelor degree it's good. I don't know why. Laughs
R Maybe. Maybe. But with your experience obviously, the experience really helps to, if you are educated and you have a job, a good job, it's good experience.
P Maybe next year I will try to do accountants. Because I think I have studied accounting for three years but I never do the accountants. So I think I will to try to find because I like this subject.
R Well you have lots of options. Anything you'd like to add just to finish off our interview? You can tell me about anything at all, your experiences, what you like. Or what you don't like. What you think about what's happened to you. It's been a long journey hasn't it, from....?
P From 2007, April, I come to Australia. This is four...and a half years. It's very long time. In this four years I..... When I in China I was independent so my parents think if I go Australia it's fine, don't worry, but during the four years I think I'm more independence . I can control all things. I know even something happened, I know I can deal with them....if I want. So this four years is very hard for me because I miss my family always and I cannot come back and in this two years my family my mom is always sick. I always want to come back. It's very hard, hard time. So when I get PR if I get in two weeks ago I get PR I think I cannot just find my next purpose in Australia. So next stage what should I want to get, so the next stage is open, I need to find my purpose.
R Yeah. And I am sure you will.
P Maybe. Both laugh. And my parents said, next stage the most important things is find a boyfriend.
OK, I try.
Both laugh again.
R So find a boyfriend. So you are going back to China for that? Lots of Chinese boys here in Australia.
P No, I don't think so. I think in Sydney the boys and girls is not balanced. The girls is more so, I don't know.
R Alright, that's us finished.
P Thank you.

Appendix 16

Third interview James

R so, when we last talked...what's it been? About 12 months?
J Yeah, more than 12 months I think.

R More than 12 months? So, you've had a big progress in that period. Tell me what's happened to you in the last twelve months.
J Well for a start I finish my master degree, I finally finish all my studies, and I got my permanent residence now and now I am looking for a job to start.
R That's a big achievement isn't it?
J Yeah, thank you.
R How do you feel about that, how are you feeling?
J Ah, really excited actually. Maybe it's a little bit shame, but I have so say, oh, I don't have to study any more. That's one of the biggest thing, and, ah....just feel relieved after all this years and I have done everything and I know I couldn't do any better and I know I do the right thing and focus on this, and enjoy myself (??)
R So, a very exciting time for you. You are on the verge of a new career and a new life.
J Yeah, I think so.
R Describe for me what are your feelings about the future.
J Well I know the economy's really tough at the moment and not doing really well about getting a new job but ah, I am quite confident about the future, ah, I know I love this .line of work, I think I will continue to do it. I think I am going to do it well.
R Mmmm, because right from the word go, right from the first day you walked into a business class in Lang Fang you knew this was going to be your career.
J Mmm, not quite. Because I always know I am going to work in business sector, I am not quite sure, accounting or finance degrees but along the way I think I just, I really love accounting.
R So tell me your degrees, you have a Bachelor of ....?
J I got a Bachelor of Commerce which is majored in Accounting and minored in Economics, and I did my Master of Finance, so that's about it. And, for the Master of Finance thing, was really mainly for the PR reasons. I do like it, but I think I am going to focus on accounting.
R OK so your major in your masters....?
J Applied Finance.
R Applied Finance. OK. So, describe what you think your future is going to be like.
J Pause ...ah, well, I am not really sure what to .....but I think it would be a white collar career and 9 to 5 working time and just daily working and just work my way through it I think.
R OK, but can you see....what's your ultimate career goal? Do you want to have your own business, or do you want to work for one of the big 4?
J Ah, hesitates) ...I think I am going to ...ah, if it is possible I want to be to be the ???? one day.
R You want to be the???
J The CFO. The Chief Finance Officer. I am going to make all the big decisions.....(...) and I am not really thinking about working in the public accounting area so probably not for the big four, more in the commercial sector.
R The commercial sector?
J Yeah,
R How will your Australian education....will that contribute to your career goals?

J Quite a lot. That's the only course I actually did help me to learn what is real business looks like and really practice my accounting skills.
R Could you have had the same experience if you had stayed in China to study?
J No, not really. I got a couple of friends who study at a Chinese university and the teaching course is still is basically like we did in high school, like give you general theories and you don't really have a chance to practise them, and, ah, they not really related to the public work, I think, so it's a big gap between university education and the real working life.
R OK so you don't think you would have had the same benefits by staying in China and studying and getting your degrees in China?

J Ah, two different things. I think, ah, I could still get accounting job if I stay in China, study accounting degree there, but the thing is I have to learn everything from the start again and it's just like you go to a new career and you don't have any working knowledge of that and you learn from the beginning. But here I think that you really can choose what you want you to do after you finish your degree. And if you don't really like accounting, you can switch to the something related and you have idea what's the, your daily job is going to be looks like and you can, and maybe you can take a few days to really get used to, to really get to know how to work in the sector but you have general knowledge of that I think. That's all.
R OK, could you put an estimate on how much your Australian education cost you?
J Ah, pauses
R Just look at the fees for a start.
J Ah, twenty thousand dollars ... two thousand dollars a subject
R That's for undergraduate
J Yeah, and pretty much the same for a master degree. How many subject I did? Eight a year, twenty four for the undergraduate, that's 48000 for undergraduate and I think about 30,000 for the postgraduate with living I think, about 100,000.
R With living, around 100000?
J Yeah
R OK, so your fees for around that time would have been 78?
J 78, yeah, something like that.
R Speaking honestly, absolutely honestly, do you think it was worth it?
J Ummm ,I think if you really study it, I think it worth it, because education really works. I don't really think you can compare how much you pay in China, how much you pay here. Education quality is way better from Australian to Chinese ones. It really depends whether you can afford it I think. If you can afford it, I think it's worth it from the personal perspective. But if you come here, I got a couple of friends who just come here, playing around and never really doing any study just waste of time.
R Mmm waste of time. OK, what would you describe as the greatest benefits of your Australian education.
J Ahhh, pauses ...ah, I think it just gives me an idea of another education system, I think that's one of the most important things. I have been used to the Chinese way of thinking and working, for like 20 years, all my life, and now I think just you can you know why people don't, why people think different ways and you know why people behave different in these two countries, and just (pause, just general good experience....to know you can ... pause....personal experience I think. Life experience.
R Life experience. If you had stayed in China, where would you be going now with your career?

J Ah, well I think for the undergraduates it is really hard to get a job and I really think I need my parents' help to get a job in the sector they work, so they have relationships, I can straight away, probably get a job start completely not related to my study. That's probably about it, right.
R OK, so here you think your studies will take you in to your career, whereas in China that may not have been the case. You would have used those relationships to get a job, but maybe not in your chosen career?
J Yes.
R You, ah, studied at Griffith, both of your degrees at Griffith?
J Yep
R What was that experience like?
J I think for my undergraduate, it was fabulous. I love it. .. love my teaching staff, I love the help from the uni, and, ah really learned everything. I knew nothing about Australia but now I know a lot, I know the law sitting, how the law works, how the political thing runs and how everyday working day life is related with the economy and stuff like that. For my postgraduate I'm a little bit disappointed because I got a couple of friends who have studied at

different university and we have compared what we have learned. I feel like the Master degree coursework is more like a, is just more like another diploma and ah, doesn't really get extend to it like a real postgraduate degree, you still learn the same thing as the master (corrects himself), under-graduate degree.

R OK and your lecturers...you went to Nathan?

J Yeah, I went to Nathan campus and most of my lecturer are from the same background as me, all from Chinese, eh, China.

R Was that helpful though?

J Not quite. I think. Ah, for the three years of my undergraduate I really get used to the way Australian teachers teach, and for

R Describe that to me. What do you mean?

J Well, Australian teachers teach – they don't..... ah, sometimes they read all the lecture, lecture slide and they really try to get you idea of, ah, how to , ah....mmm...they give you a problem, they don't tell you the answer , they tell you how to define the problem and how to work step by step to find the answer for the problem. That's the most thing I gained from my experience, from from my education in Australia. In China, all the Chinese they all like 'what is going to be on the exam, study that, memory that.'

R Even in your post-grad subjects?

J Yeah, pretty much the same. And they give us the structure of the exam and tell you what's the key points you need to review and....

R So what you are saying is the Chinese teachers who were teaching in your post-grad subjects were teaching more in a Chinese style than in a Western style?

J Yeah, pretty much. They give you pretty much ... all the structure was the same as the Australian education structure but it's....they are going to focus on the exam material, they don't go into the beyond. For example my undergraduate economics lecturer , they really related to today's issue like the GFC and the political stuff, they really analysed how this is going to impact our day to day life and whether the ah, a for example whether the minimum wage is going to help unemployment rates, or something like that. But in the my post-grad my Chinese lecturer, the stock option for example, they don't really relate it to how the GFC affects the stock or your options trading, they just give you the formulas and you just put the number into them, they didn't really give you the meaning of the formula.

R So the real world playing out?

J Yeah, the application.

R The application. That must have been disappointing?

J Yeah, pretty much. Because I have also applied couple of finance jobs and the thing I asked them for my interview, I couldn't really answer them because I need trading experience. I don't really know how to analyse the share, whether it's good or bad. Even for some basic exam models, we didn't do any for my post-graduate. Very disappointing.

R And you are hearing from your friends at other universities that they did that work?

J Yes, they have a whole subject, they have to simulation trading, they have to pick up a couple of shares, they have to analyse and they see the results, what's they put money on it.

R Have you given that feedback to the university?

J Yes, I have been invited to the graduation survey for the university and give all my thoughts.

R OK, well alright let's hope that has some impact in the future. Thinking very carefully, and again, being as frank and as open as you can, did you think you got enough support from Griffith both at, well you said you got quite a lot of help at undergraduate level. What sort of help was that.

J Well when I first start, I found I was really struggling with my academic writing and did not really understand what research is about so my first year subjects I have to do research and write on different topics and we have academic working shops and lots of research working shops and that's very helpful I think. And for the writings, to be honest, my grammar was really bad, so we usually lose lots of points on the grammar and Griffith also offer writing review help. You can book it. Academic Writing, they review all your papers, they tell you,

'what's this'. Mostly tell you the structure and the grammar, not telling you the context. But I think that's really helpful.
R OK, so helped you with your writing significantly?
J Yeah, and, ah, lots of things I think from the library and they also have the resume writing workshops and stuff like that, research, most things.
R ok AND DID YOU get a lot of help in your master degree.
J Well, truth to be told, I didn't really seek a lot of help because I got used to the way of study here so I didn't really seek a lot of help.
R So, do you think that the universities could have done more. Speaking for you, and for other students you know about.
J Well, the one thing that cause me concern, I got lots of friends, they don't really attend to class and..... they can still manage with a pass and I think university should really...ah.... set up more regulations around the attending stuff, attendance, and ah, really look after the overseas students. Sometimes they been....lose their focus and sometimes they just, they just don't want study any more and sometimes they work too much and even we have the 20 hour limit per week working hours but , sometimes they do for the Chinese restaurants stuff like that, many more hours than that.
R So you think the universities should be doing more to look after the interests of international students?
J Yeah....ah. pause...well, ah, it may at their cost, if you control them too tough and might lose students, stop coming, but I think for the longer term , you know, you want to maintain the quality of your graduates you should done a better job of maintaining a certain level of attendance and make sure when they go out (graduate) they can do their job.
R One of the other things I've heard said is that universities....a lot of international students, they stay within their language groups and they don't mix with Western students or in the Western community. Do you think universities could really do more to make sure international students are more integrated?
J Um, I think that's really, well couldn't really blame the university. They have really good program. Ah, different interest group associations you can join, complete support and you can do lots of things, they host different parties every Friday, and they just, for me personally I think Chinese people are really shy and they don't like to get involved in other cultures. So they, sometimes scary and sometimes you don't share the same interests, and ah....um....for us we love football, and we love soccer and basketball, and most Australian guys they into AFL or rugby so we don't really have much to talk about. And some they love party. And we have no idea what we do at parties. (Both laugh)...That's the thing, huh.
R So, it seems to be though that the students who do the best are the ones who have to get out into the community and use their language.
J Yes. Pause.....The most .....ah, I got a couple of friends, they may not doing well in their studies, but their language skills are magnificent. Because they actually got a couple of Aussie friends and they go party with them, just social with them, so this is the way you to learn really how Australian people talk, not like we do from TV or from studies.
R But you say they are not doing so well in their studies?
J Yeah, most of them, as I said, they lose focus on their studies, they just start to party too much I think.
R Alright, so the social life becomes too much? It's very hard finding a balance. OK
J Balance, yeah.
R What were the most difficult times of your education? What did you struggle with the most?
J Ah, I would say academic writing, because I never really read, never read understand the idea of academic writing and research, ah, and my.... my degree really wouldn't help because Accounting is more practical stuff, is more, ah, applied ..uh, application and stuff like that so when I first start academic writing, for the research, I always have the idea if you go to write something from your own idea you should write it, you shouldn't copy it from the other guys, from the other authors. That's my whole challenge ... and, ah....

R So that whole idea of bringing together other authors', and referencing it, and building on that?
J Yeah, that's quite hard for me.
R That's quite cultural though isn't it?
J Yeah, because we never have research, we never have to quote from others in China.
R OK, how did you get around those difficulties?
J Well I think pretty much it's compulsory, you have to, you don't have a choice. But I think, I did two months language school before I go to university so I got a little bit of an idea how that thing works, and as I said, the library stuff really helps and I attended a couple of workshops and get the idea, and ask my lecturer how does it work and ask them to mark my draft, that sort of thing.
R OK and is that would you say the most common problem most international students face
J Yeah, I think for my school yes, for commerce yes, because we don't really write a lot so we don't used to it. And for most international students they have more focus on research like hospitality, tourism, art, media, they have to write a lot, they are used to it. I just think speaking, the language skills, are really concern.
R Concern?
J Yeah, after they graduate they couldn't get the same language score as they get before
R So you are saying their language score actually dropped?
J Yeah.
R And why is that? Is that to do with the fact that they are not actually engaging with Western communities.
J Maybe it's not really their language skills job it is more like they don't really....I will still argue IELTS test is not really best way to evaluate one's language skills so probably they not studying IELTS a lot and they don't know how to answer the IELTS questions and that sort of stuff.
R What do you think is a better way of evaluating language skills?
J Ummm, ah....pauses.....I would think ...pause...for speaking test, give them a hot topic about the general news or public news, something like that, and discuss with them in an informal way. Not really answer the question, describe something, or something like that....and ... pause...well, pretty much how you are going to test listening and reading.
R Yeah it's a difficult question, isn't it? My research is about how universities can improve study in Australia for international students. So what are your thoughts on that?
J Long pause.....from my personal background, ah, education culture was more conservative? you have to study, you have to pass the test, and ah, the teachers' authority can not be challenged.
But I think in Australia that was a little bit different. I think once international student go into Australian education system, especially Asian background, they feel much more relaxed and they don't really pay much attention to the teachers any more....and here, I think the teaching , I think the study really depends on yourself. Because lecturer can only help you so much, if you ask them for the help. So mmm....there should a special department is doing regular check with international student to see how they going and don't let them just be mixed up with other local student. .just...charge them when they fail.
R So a lot more focus on making sure that they are coming along with the program.
J Yeah
R And you think a special department should do that?
J Maybe not a special department. Just ah, we have international student department. Maybe they just do a regular check with them....spot check? Something like that.
R How would students feel about that sort of attention. Would they feel that they were being singled out, or would they welcome that?
J Sucks in air....ah, yeah, maybe the issue I think. Pause.. Maybe they l....ah….maybe they won't like it because make the rules more tougher on them, but I think after they really

finish their study, I think if they want to study and do well I think they are going to welcome them, I think.
R Could that have helped you, do you think. What could Griffith have done to make your studies easier or more fulfilling, both academically and personally.
J Ah, ...pause...well....ah.....I would like to be more involved in the lecture, tutorial, seminar, something like that. Sometimes, ah, ...we...ah.....it might be because my personal background, we really shy culture, we don't like to stand up and ask the questions, we like to hold back and be quiet. So , ah, maybe sometimes little bit compulsory stuff is good. You know? We don't really have much speech or presentation for our assessment so maybe a little bit more engagement would be good. Eh?
R So that would have helped you do you think? And would have helped your career as well?
J Yeah built up my confidence I think...
R OK that's a very good point. You had quite a lot of contact too, you didn't live with exclusively Chinese students when you first came here. You lived with multicultural, in a multicultural household. Did that help you do you think to develop your language skills?
J Yes, oh, that's most important thing I think. Even though most of them come from Asian background, we still cannot speak their own, their language so we have to communicate in English and that's really good for our confidence and we both ..we don't worry if we make a mistake so long as we understand, so keep practise.
R OK...
J It helps
R So maybe universities should be looking at where students live and who they live with. Is tht possible do you think?
J Yes, we do have accommodations I think. So if they can mix up the cultures they would be help.
R And so do you think universities should be trying to put in place formal programs so that international students can mix with local people and develop friendships. Is that too much?
J I think trying to mix the cultures is better for presentation assessment. You know sometimes the group is compulsory, sometimes is based on your own preference.
R I guess I was talking about your study, so that you come here as an Asian student at, what were you, 18 when you arrived?
J Yep
R Not quite?
J 18 I think
R OK so maybe pairing you up with someone who is local so you can get some guidance from a local student. Is that a possibility?
J Yeah, actually, I think some university offer the mentor program . If you are first year you have a second year or third year student look after you your subject for the degree you are doing. I think that might help.
R so mentor programs could be beneficial , you think?
J Yeah, we do have mentor programs for my degree and we have someone from Australian university industry they come along and talk with you and how the real life works, or something like that. But most of them is not compulsory so people don't ..attend them.
R It was put to me too that Chinese students feel that their culture is superior, because of the amazing things that have been developed in China and they see the culture here as being a mish mash of different cultures, and that's why Chinese people are not so interesting in learning the culture. How would you respond to that statement – made by a Chinese person.
J Yeah, ah, well the thought does come through but I think....pauses....well, some people does have that thought and it's not really uncommon because .....pauses.....it's like we live in two different circles and the things we interested in is not is not the same and we don't really have the common thing to talk with the local people ...pause ... and we not really used to

the way they thinking. We don't really laugh at their jokes, they don't really laugh at our jokes. That the small thing, but that's the difference, something like that.
R Yeah
J But for the superiority .... pause....that's probably for some people.....uncertain....
R Ok so that's probably true for some people, it doesn't matter where you come from they are always going to think that. OK that's fine, it doesn't seem to be an issue for you.
J Nah.
R OK you said when, in our first interview, let me just get to it....that permanent residence was a big factor, you want to stay in Australia for another five years, um, and , ah ah , you are going to stay for five years, do my CPA and go back to China, because 'I don't think I can probably fit into the society now. I am still struggling with my language. So I don't think I can build a good career if I stay in Australia.' That was the first interview we did. Oh, two years ago maybe. Now clearly things have changed for you?
J Yeah, I'm doing a sales job, so I have to deal with people a lot, so I am quite confident about my language. I think I still have lots of opportunity to improve, but I think I can ..I am shy any more, I am confident to talk to people, and I think to build up a career here is a challenge for me, so I really fulfilled if I complete the goal so I would welcome the challenge.
R OK, so you've really changed in these two years, if you look at the statement you made and the statement now, you've changed al lot in two years.
J Yeah, I think so, for all the confidence I got in front of them.
R That's terrific. OK there's just one last thing I wanted to ask you. You say your language skills have improved. When was your last IELTS test?
J I think a year ago?
R OK a year ago, and you got 8.5 for reading
J Yeah, 8.5 for reading, and 8 for listening, and 7 for speaking, and 6.5 for writing.
R OK, 6.5. I see you are not quite there ...
J Shouts
R OK but you don't have to do another IELTS test because you have PR
J Breathes out. Yeah, that's good!
R OK so how did you manage PR without the 7 across all skills.
J I got it under the old policy, because I came here a long time ago.
R When did you have to arrive?
J I think the policy is before the last ....1 July if you apply PR you can get actual points if you have , if you do an undergraduate in Australia and do a Master degree, you can get an extra 15 points so I just got in under the policy, so I don't need IELTS 7.
R OK .
J Really lucky.
R It was lucky. And things have changed now. How do you feel about all these changes? How do students feel about all these changes in immigration law? Is it concerning? What do you say to people back in China who may be thinking about coming to Australia for a degree?

J Well, the one thing I would be concern is the cost. The Australian dollar really appreciate a lot yeah, is actually more people, last couple of years, everyone recommend to go to Australia because the education quality is good, and the cost is relatively low, compared to British and the States but now they really recommend you go to a United States, and the quality is not bad and the cost is a lot cheaper than here....the living cost is much cheaper than here. And alsi the immigration law, ah, serious? I really get furious about that because the policy should work on the way, the policy should .....pause....the policy ....you can change the policy, but the policy should remain the same for the time you got here. The policy should stay the same for those people.
R And that hasn't happened?
J No, they changed the policy. Say that want to change the policy from the 1st July, so if you not apply for the citizenship or permanent residency 1st July next year, everything is going to apply, you are going to get approved based on the new policy. So I think the new policy is

really work against us. Like, we are trying to get permanent residency through education – that's their argument. People who want to study in Australia shouldn't really have concern for permanent residency. If you want to have permanent residence, you must be an asset to the country, so you must have working experience or something like that. The point based test got really hard now. It used to be that you could have 10 points for IELTS 6 and 20 points for IELTS 7 Now you don't have any points for L6 and you have 5 points for L7.

R How many?

J Five points or ten points. And if you got IELTS 8 across the board you got 20 points. That's really hard for everyone. A nd the new points system depends on how the pr is offered to the people with the highest score, so it doesn't matter when you lodge your application, if there is someone with higher score than you, they are going to get pr.

R A language score?

J No , a points score. They are going to get an offer before you.

R So there is no certainty.

J No, no certainty at all. Especially for the people who attended TAFE and they want to get the permanent residence through their diploma degree, or something like that, so that's a big concern.

R And will that after the number of people who come to Australia do you think?

J Yes, significantly. For my old agency, oz agency, I think the people have dropped 80 percent or something like that. Because it cost a lot to study here, it costs a lot to live here, and it's really hard to remain here after they finish, so and also it's really hard for international students to get a job to start with, so they don't have working visa, they have to go straight back to China if they finish their study, but in America, I think it's a little bit more easier to get a job there, so they can work there for one or two years with their study visa, something like that.

R Yeah, they are changing that here in Australia so you get two years after you finish your education, so you can stay here for two years. OK. And that system's fairer.

R So you'll see Chinese students go to America rather than Australia, is that what you are saying?

J Yes. Because the cost's gone up and....it's really.....they used to recommend people to study here because of the immigration was easier here, was easier to get pr and you could go to the country you want, but now it's getting tougher.

R Tougher?

J Yeah

R OK...but for you?

J Ah...breathes out. Not my cause any more.

R Not your concern. You have your PR, your undergraduate degree, your masters degree, you are doing your CPA, you've got permanent residence. Congratulations, it's been quite a journey.

J I love it. I've enjoyed myself along the way. That's fine for me.

R That's the most important thing.

Third interview, Daisy

R This is an interview with Daisy, recorded on the 10th is it today, or 11th perhaps of September. And this is our third interview. And Daisy it's more than a year since I spoke to you last. Tell me what you've been doing in the past year.

S In the past year I purchased a coffee shop and try to do my own business, yeah, and focus on my business in the last year. That's all.

R OK and so you're now the owner of a Coffee Club here, in Rhodes Shopping Centre. How has that been for you?

S It's quite hard at the beginning. But now it is very easy. Yes. I like the ....the business is really stable and Australian people like to drink coffee.

R So it was a good decision?

S Yes, I think it's good decision.

R Just tell me, what degree did you finish?

S Ah...

R What was your degree?

S Bachelor of Applied Finance.

R And you did that at???

S What?

R What university?

S University...Macquarie University.

R And you finished when?

S Laughs. I can't remember. One or two.... two years ago.

R Two years ago. So you've had this coffee shop for one year. What were you doing between finishing your degree and getting the lease on this coffee shop?

S I try to find a job and researching a business for me. And because it really really hard find a job. Because in Australia the experience is very important. But for me, I don't get much experience in finance and especially after 2008 a lot of positions was cut down so there's little chance for me to find a good job, so I decided to try to build up my own business. And it's taken me about six months or seven months to purchase before I start this business. First we look around a lot of business and looking to see the you know profit and the loss statements and also organise everything. You know I nearly buy a newsagency... nearly. But finally we found a lot of problems and we decide to give it up. And then we started to see the coffee shop around my apar....my place, it's in Rhodes in Olympic Park, and Macquarie Shopping Centre. We compare lots of different business and we, I decide to buy the coffee club. It's like, um, (pause), this business is really good because it's not only serves coffee it also serves food, yeah, and it's like provides the variety (stumbles over word) for people. Yes.

R Good business

S So that's why it's really hard to get??? People if they don't have money they may not eat food outside but they will have a coffee. It's $3. It's nothing for them, and some people you know they may have food, they not want drink coffee. It's like, it's providing most....it's like two sides. You know two p???. It makes the business stable. Especially for now. You know the economy is not recovered totally and still low, yes, so I think it's really good choice.

R Do you think, did you degree help you with your business here?

S Yes, definitely. Because if you choose a business, you will see the profit and the loss statements. You will see the ...you pay for the profit. If the business don't make any money, you don't buy any business. Yeah. You do business because you want make money, and I study finance in my university, and I know how to choose a business, like how to calculate the cost. When they give you the documents, they always hide some cost, because they want you to pay higher, yes.

R When you are buying a business?

S Yes, definitely. They want....so they always I mean, they always hide the cost, like electricity, like some repairs, the tenants, this kind of cost they try to hide it. But if you have

the business knowledge, you know oh, that's not true. You know how much the business worth. So that's very important because you want to buy a business, you pay that much money, you want to make that much profits. And you know...(R interrupts).yeah?
R Do you think you could have gone into this business without having done that degree?
S No.
R Well that's good to hear. It's been useful.
R Let's just talk about your Australian education. So you're telling me your Australian education has helped you set up a business here. Could you just estimate the total cost of your Australian education. How much you spent on fees, first of all, and how much you spent supporting yourself in Australia through your degree.
S Hesitates
R Roughly, it doesn't have to be exact.
S Actually I can't remember, but for the ....for the university fee is like 60,000 thousand in total.
R Sixty thousand in total. Speaking honestly, was it worth it do you think?
S Hesitates a moment. No.
R No? Tell me why, and be honest with me why you don't think it was worth it.
S Hesitates again. Because I learned something from the university, but not that much. I think experience is more important. I come to Australia because you know, in Australia overseas students, they pay like triple the local. If I am local here I would say like it's worth, but it's like we pay triple than them, but we didn't learn that much, and that's why I don't think it's worth.
R So would you have had the same opportunities if you had just gone to work in a coffee shop, do you think? Would you have gotten experience that way? Would that have given you enough experience?
S OK sorry I didn't understand
R Ok, so you're saying your university degree was helpful because it taught you about finance, but you don't think it was worth sixty thousand dollars. What other opportunities could you have taken to be where you are now if you didn't have that degree?
S Aaaaah
R Would experience have been enough if you'd gone to a coffee shop to work, for example.
S Coffee shop the experience is quite different but when you buy the shop I use some accounting knowledge but it's only the first year what I learned, not the whole three years. Yeah. The three years, I learned a lot of different knowledge but the useful things is like a third or not that much.
R So do you regret having done the education, now?
S It's like a ...it's like a ....you do this first, you learn more, you develop yourself more, then it's another step of the life. Yu can't say I regret.
R Well let me ask you, would a Chinese degree have helped you achieve the same outcome.
S No.
R Why not?
S Because if I, you know for me, the most important thing is I come to Australia is the culture. The culture helped me a lot, not the degree. If I in China the culture is quite different. There, the degree is much more ... and you always focus on degree but you wouldn't use that in your life and it doesn't help you to do your work better so I don't think I can achieve what I did if I am still in china.
R OK so tell me, what would you describe as your greatest benefit of your Australian education. You've lived here for what, five years now. What has been the greatest benefit?
S As I said, I think the culture like if the culture is most important for me, and it changed my mind a lot. Previously when I in China I think degree is important, but when I came here, I saw lot of people, they they don't care about degree. They think the experience is important. Not like working experience, life experience. Like social, social life is also important, so I think I

think when I go here I open the mind ???? and the mind changed a lot. It's helped me to helped me a lot in the future life.
R How do you see your future? Is your future going to be here in Australia?
S Ah, I am not sure. Maybe I will stay here for 3 or 4 years because now I am doing the business and I felt this year when I came back to China I see Australia the business, the ....business is more balanced than china and if I can use this theory to go back to china to go to a shop or build up a franchise in china it's more easy to get successful. And I know Chinese people they think, they don't have an opportunity to go outside, but they think the western things is always good. You know the Pizza Hut the McDonald the KFC is very popular in China and the owner make lots of money but actually when I came here the what I find the franchise system, when I really run a franchise, is really good but but it's like the theory and the way to run a franchise is much more advanced than china. If I can stay here for longer and understand how to run a franchise I wish to go back china and build up my own franchise.
R Right, OK, so that's your long-term goal. You told me before we started recording that you are still waiting to get permanent residence, but I remember over 12 months ago you told me you had applied for permanent residence and you had your language tests and I think you said you got 7; 7 7 7 6.5. So, what's been the delay?
S My agent told me, it's like because Australia they limit the new immigration so they just delay it two or three years, so just waiting for that.
R That's very difficult. Are you very disappointed about that?

S That's fine. I know....
R Honestly? It's okay?
S Honestly. You know this program ah, about you know the new of the immigration rule because opportunity is like, how to say, the people and if they limit the immigration and if a lot of Chinese want to come here for study and it slow down the business and it slow down the economic and you know the education a lot of teacher will lose their jobs. And you know a lot of Chinese people come here for study they contribute a lot of money to Australia but if the immigration change, you know they are change and they are very restrict (strict/restrictive?) on it. Yeah. It's not good for the economy.
R Because I think....and one of the other students said this to me, that students felt if they came here and got their degree and got their language, then permanent residence was also guaranteed. But that's going back to 2005. But that's not the case now?
S No, it's very different. It's very hard. So lots of people know Australian dollar is very high, it's nearly the same as American, and if they don't have opportunity to get pr, get pr her, why do they choose Australia, why don't they go to America?
R And that will happen, do you think?
S Yeah, because I heard a lot of
People, they go to America for study, because it doesn't I mean it is almost the same. After you study you have to go back to China so why don't you choose America. In Chinese mind, they think American education is ....than Australia, I think, eh?
R Yeah, so that will have a big influence, obviously. What sort of visa are you on at the moment?
S Bridge visa
R Misunderstands.....A business visa? Because you own your own business?

S No, Bridging visa.
R And how long can that last?
S Til I get my PR.
R And what would happen if you didn't get PR>
S It doesn't matter because I will get marred next year and he's PR so after we married if I got problem here I can still stay here or apply for PR for partner. So doesn't matter. I don't care.

R I want to just talk about your education and talk about the government because in my other interviews too the students said they didn't get much support. They came here, that the government encouraged them to come here, they enrolled in universities, but the universities didn't really help them all that much, and the government didn't help them at all. What's your experience of that?
S I think it's different, kind of different state. In New South Wales, student get different kind of support than others. You know normally they have the student for the tickets they got half price
R Transport tickets?
S Yeah, transport. And for a lot of benefit, student get discount. But for NSW FOR THE overseas student, none of them provide any benefit. So that's really bad.
R Alright, that's to do with the conditions, social conditions if you like. Did anyone ever contact you from the university, from Macquarie, to see how you are going, are you managing, what's your accommodation like?
S Nothing
R I know there are lots of facilities for student to get help. But no one contacted you to make sure you were okay.

S No one contacted me. But if you got problems, you can contact them, they will provide you if you got questions. But if you don't ask, I think the tutor and teachers always good. Because when I started at university when I got problems I always go to the consultation and ask them actions. They are helpful and they like to talk to you and solve your problems. But if you don't contact them, they won't contact you. There's a lot of students. How can they manage? How can they contact them individually and say, how are you. How do you feel? I think its depends on how you do that.
R So what about with the government? Any approach from the government to see how you are going with your education?
S Shakes head
R Nothing at all. OK let's come back to your education. What were the most difficult things for you during your education? I know it's a couple of years now.
S I don't know. I think it's alright. I don't think there's a lot of difficults. For me is okay and if I am learning and I don't know, I will go to....I will ask my tutor so they are really helpful so I don't think there are a lot of problems.
R I don't think....that's at a tutor/teacher level, but I am talking at an organisational level. My research is about how universities can improve study for international students, how universities can do that. What are your thoughts on that?
S Can you repeat please?
R My research is about how universities, not just the teachers and the tutors, can improve the outcomes for international students. A lot of students ... you've done fine but a lot of students do struggle. So what are your thoughts about what universities could do to help international students. What are your thoughts on this?
S Actually I have no idea of this one. Because as I said, I don't have any problem and also in my university they got a soc....how to say, you know the social ...student union...they have a Chinese union of different country, they set up a student union for all students coming, and also they got a free language course. It's all people from overseas and they provide free, free chance to teach you more about Australia culture and more about the language.
R So there was a lot of help provided from Macquarie?
S Yes. I think they really have to.
R One of the other comments I've had made is one of the students who came here, from the time she came here til the time she left, she didn't have any Australian friends. She didn't speak the language much. That she really just lived and worked and socialised with other Chinese students. Is that typical do you think?
S Yes, that's typical.
R Is that good? Bad?

S It's not good but what you can say? Because the culture is different. You know the Australia people, they like...the way they relax is in bar. They like making friends in bar. Just have a beer and chatting. Because they don't have that much to share in the life experiences quite different. Even though you chat with them it's like very how to say, it's like very general chat. You can't be friends unless you have like similar experience. It's really hard. You can talk to them the weather or this this this, but you can't share your secrets and your feeling. You know because you are in different position. They can't understand you and you can't understand them. It's really hard.
R But surely if you are students together, you have some shared experiences with other students who are non Chinese for example. What about those? Is there much sharing between native English speaker students and international students at uni?

S Because we only have the tutorial together in the university. That's the only chance you have to share the study experience with native speakers. It's local. But in the lecture, it's really big lecture room and you don't know each other. You don't talk to each other. But in tutorial, yes, if you are studying together and you are doing group assignment and group working, I think it is really well.
R But one of the other suggestions was that universities could set up mentoring groups where they pair an international student with a native speaker.
S That's a good idea.
R Would that help, do you think?
S Yes.
R Would you be interested in doing that , for example if you were coming into the university now, would you like to have an Australian friend to introduce you to other people?
S Yes. I don't know how about Australian people think, but Chinese people, when they first come here, they really want to make a friend with locals, but it's like if they have this it will help them a lot.
R One of the other interviewees said Chinese people tend to stick to themselves because they think their culture is very superior and really the western cultural isn't very important. Is that something in our experience you've found?
S Sorry what do you mean by superior?
R Better
S Better?
R Yes, that the culture ...that Australians don't really have much culture ....in the West because we come from all over the place. Whereas China is a very old country with a culture.... with a big history.
S No, I don't think so. Like I said, I like Australia culture because it's open.
R Open?
S It's linked to the world and the Chinese is like really conservative and they only focus on themselves. Whereas in Australia ....as long as it is better than you, you have the chance to learn that. It is good for people...it is good for people to develop themselves and you got more chance to connect with more advanced knowledge, more advanced technique. I think it's better. It's good....
R OK, let's just finish up. You've come here, you've been here for five years. It's been a big journey hasn't it, from Inner Mongolia to Rhodes Shopping Centre.
Both laugh
R So you've been here for five years, you have a successful business, you've got a degree. But you've paid a lot of money for it. Do you think it's been worth it? Do you think you've got value for money? Was it worth it for your education?
S Yeah. As I said I paid for the experience in Australia, not for the education. If only for education, I don't think it's worth that. But for my experience in Australia I think it is worth it.
R Would you recommend an Australian education to your friends when you go home? If someone said to you, 'I'm think about going to Australia to study', what would you say to them.

S Well again, it's really good. Because when you come to Australia and you will find the education system is really different. Now is more focussed on people. I mean on self study. In China it is focussed on the teacher. As long as you got a good teacher, you can learn a lot from the teachers. But here you only have less than 20 hours a week for studying at university and all the times you have to organise by yourself. It's all the time like a test for yourself. A lot of people can't pass...fail university, because they can't control their time because they can't manage their study and their social life and their casual....I mean .....pause.....

R (clarifying). Yeah, their social life,

S Yeah, and that's why they failure. And when you come here you know first the education. .. I like the education system, because YOU need to learn that. As long as you want to learn, you know how to listen to the teacher, how to study by yourself, how to read book. And if you have questions, you need to learn how to solve the questions. You search the information from the internet and then if you can still not understand it, you can discuss with your tutor. It's like...it encourage you to yourself to learn. It's better than Chinese education. In China, teacher always force you to learn that. You know, have a lot of homework. Do that, do that do that. But here, nothing. If you want to learn, you learn. If you don't want to learn, it doesn't matter. The university, they charge you. You know, if you fail, they happy. Because they have more chance to make money to make more money. You know? It's all about yourself.

R But do you think some students, they haven't had that experience. They come here, they haven't had the experience of having had to learn by themselves. So that's obviously a big cause of failure. Yes?

S Nods

R So how, I mean is it really an individual student's responsibility to make those life changes, or should there be more help for students to change their way of thinking, way of studying? A little bit more guidance or assistance?

S Yeah, if the university can provide some guidance ..I mean for the students....it must be helpful but in my idea, in my idea I still think person is more important.

R Okay, so it's an individual responsibility?

S Yes. If they can't especially when you leave your country, I mean everywhere, how to say it, you don't know everywhere. Go to a new country. If you can't control yourself, you can't do that. You don't need someone to push you. Yu don't need to go overseas. You can just stay in China. You don't need to spend that much money on education. It's a waste of money. If you can't learn by yourself.

R That's a very good...that whole idea of being self reliant really does set you up for your future life doesn't it?

S Yes

R But I am thinking, too, just finally, this question of permanent residence. It's been said to me that some student are poor, when they come here they don't have a lot of family backing. Maybe all their relatives have contributed.. And they think they are going to get permanent residence when they finish their degree. And they don't. Is the government dealing fairly with those students?

S No.

R Tell me. Explain why you say that.

S Ah, you know. Ah....pauses.. I have some ah, friends. They come to Australia and they study college, and then the some college break up. And they have to go to another college or university to study, but their previously study was not fully recognised. You know the government the government should help the student to, I mean, you know to organise. Because they pay for that. But after that, half way, they started like four week, the school break up. They can't get back their money. And ah, actually I think the government should give them some help. Maybe they go to another university for half a year, they pay like lower. This type of thing. But no, the government didn't help them. And for some people they can't get permanent resident. And they have to like work by themselves. It always need to depend on ...pers....I mean personal situation, but in some way, like some people they have the chance

to finish their degree and get permanent residence. But school break up. They can't. They lose the chance. That's not fair for them.

R And the government's regulation....

S (Interrupts) yeah, the government's regulation should help them. Like term or half year. Like help them to, because they can't control them (the situation). It don't mean they don't work hard, they don't study hard. It's just the school break up and some problems and like.....

R They are left with no support.

S Yeah.

R A final thing, and this is definitely the last question. You talked about the difficulty of getting a job, and I know a lot of my students and friends say they finish even a master's degree and they can't get jobs in their chosen professions. And you talked about this before when you said experience is very very important. I mean what's the answer there? What's the situation where you have students with the language skills – they have their IELTS 6 to apply, they've got their masters degrees in finance for example, but they can't get their experience because no one will give them a job. Is that a common thing? Have you found that?

S Very common. You know, even for my shop, I first you know because here, they have a company, they want to make more money, and for people under twenty, the wages is much lower, so if you are 17 and you want to get job, reception...every employer they want to recruit you because they pay less for the training. But if you are over 20, or over 25 years old after you finish your master's degree, you still don't have any experience. But the employer, they need pay you the wages. Yeah. It's.. but they don't want to pay you that much for training a new people. It's like a kind of waste. And also they don't know if after training you are able to work. So that's why it's really hard for people don't have experience to find a job. Normally for here I find people like 17 or 16 or maybe 15, they go to find like some job, like jobs in hospitality, like in coffee, MacDonald, KFC. And after they are like, after they get older and because you like have like this kind of working experience even though it not really relevant to any professional job, but it's really good for you because when you working you always are thinking, and you know how to deal with the boss, and you know what you need to do. You know it's a lot of things. Not only, not professional knowledge, but also the ability to work and you know the procedure and how it likes, so it also help you find the more professional job in the future. So that' why the.... I mean here, people like to recruit young people first than the people who have working experience than people don't have experience. They don't want to waste their money or time. Yeah.

Finish

Interview 2 July2012 Assoc. Prof. Catherine

R Catherine, first of all I want to talk about four different things. One is the language learning role as it pertains to you, language issues relating to students, the academic environment in which they work and personal experience of international students, and finally if you're agreeable, the notion of international students in terms of the role they play in university life.

So, first of all, can you describe your job from the work you are doing as it relates to international students in Australia.

C OK, so my job from the time this office was set up, or the centre, which is called Communication Skill Centre, we were set up to provide support to international students. However right from the start I said I wanted it to be everybody; not just international, but local as well because my belief is that language development is something continuous and that people are at all sorts of stages along a continuum , and therefore we have to provide the sort of development support they need.

R OK. So what sort of programs do you have here to help specifically international students?

C OK, we have set workshops on you know, how to write an essay, how to do a presentation, what I call the generic ALL sorts of workshops. We have three modules. One is called CLASS, and it's to do with academic writing. So it's a nine week module just on academic writing. Then we have another module called Critical Analysis in Business it's called (CAB). That's really a very structured, scaffolded process of getting to critical analysis. And it's working very well....we've run it for three semesters we're really happy with the way students have taken to that. Specifically for international students there's a conversation class. That's really aimed at international students and it's to improve their ... not their business communication but every day speaking skills, and the topics are everyday topics.

R Such as?

C Such as ... I've even got a list of it here. Um, conversation, such as 'meet and greet', 'taboo topics', 'first impressions' 'hot or not' 'you're wrong I'm right', so it's very much about language. Because we feel that's what's what blocking international students from meeting local students from participating in class because they don't know the everyday language. So this is aimed very much at the everyday language not business language.

R So the students, how do they respond to that?

C They initially all want to come, they want to come forever, then they get caught up as with a lot of these pre-set things, they get caught up. They've got three assignments due they've been up half the night, and the attendance doesn't last, unfortunately. They all want to do the conversation class. They all register for it in the beginning, but the numbers don't....and I'm pretty sure it's not because our staff are not good, because they are a pretty great team, and they are good teachers. It's just that by mid semester we find attendance drops because then all the assignments are due and so on honestly students can't keep up.

R OK so do they do that in their first semester here?

C They can do it anytime. So those classes are available to them any time they like. We run them every semester.

R Do you do any programs w here students are tested for language on exit?

C No. We have Curtain has a central online tool called Uni English developed by Katie .. and that's available to anyone who wants to take it but it's never been made compulsory. So it's come on line its publicised quite widely especially for new students, and once they get diagnosed like you should seek help urgently, or your language skills are fine you'll manage , a whole range of comments , then it refers them to places on campus that canal in help them if they need it.

R OK, is the trend, I shouldn't say a trend, but a couple of universities have adopted a compulsory language subject for all in international students, Griffith being one of them. What's your response to that?

C We've always been reluctant at Curtin to make anything compulsory including um so one of the things we have done, we have a language proficiency strategy about to come out soon, and what we've done with that is every faculty has a language type unit but how much they are really language development. And they're supposed to be for everybody. I don't know quite how they match. I've got no problem with units only for international students. I think it depends how you make it a requirement, whether you give it a credit or not. If it were, I would want to see it as a credit definitely. Not as a non credit.

R OK so tell me about the strategy at Curtin.

C Well I'll see if I can remember it. We haven't officially released it yet. We've got a proficiency officer who's just started a week and a half ago. She's going to work with the faculties in embedding language across the curriculum. They'd work with me because I have a fellowship grant and I've got an internal grant, a large one, to do that. And we've already had two small projects. When I saw we, me and my team, working with staff from across the uni to embed language across the curriculum. So that's one prong. The other one is post entry language assessment, and that's encouraged through those core communication e units in each faculty so each one of those has some sort of testing post entry, A and then from that, we don't quite know. Like the Health Unit for example, makes attendance at language classes compulsory if you don't reach a certain threshold. The business school has refused all this time to make anything compulsory. There's a big reluctance, I don't know why, but anyway there is.

R I suppose for Health the language issues

C Are crucial yeah yeah. So it's the post entry language assessment, the English language proficiency officer and the embedding strategies through me...that person will be working with me. I'm developing some staff development modules on embedding language across the curriculum, that's one of the things I have to do.

R So they'll be delivered to content academics?

C Yeah, anyone who wants to come along but especially content academics, yeah yeah.

R Do you think that's enough? No, let me reframe that. Do you think universities generally provide enough support? I'm talking ...Particularly about....look I know there are a lot of domestic students who need language help as well

C Yeah, yeah

R But I am talking....

C Well my starting point in all this was that universities of the 21st century should encourage intercultural learning, from international to local, local to international; I don't think that happens and I still think that if I could teach a unit that would be part of what students have to do, that's the first thing I would do with it. I would make it so local students see that they have things to learn from international students. And I don't think any university in Australia has cracked that nut yet.

But I think that's what should happen in an ideal world. Because I think the culture of communication is something that everybody has to develop.

R So how might that unit work?

C Hopefully ...I even outlined the unit at one point and called it Intercultural Communication in Business – that was for our faculty. I think it has to be ... I think the core subjects in each faculty I told you about would be something I'd like to design. And because I have a language background I would design that differently. The way they are, I don't think they quite work with the language thing. I think you actually have to have some language and culture and some language and content. But I think it has to be ...language specialists have to be involved there somewhere in developing that sort of stuff. Otherwise it doesn't quite work. For example, our own communication in language in Business is not written by language specialists and so ...I mean, they try to do some things but it's not the way I would do it.

R So, just coming back to that point, do you think universities do enough for the international students? Should they be doing more? I mean ...

C I think they should be doing more. But it can be forced. I just think we have to engage local students a bit more to mix with international students. And I think we have to facilitate that. How that happens, I don't know. It won't happen in the individual units because people are too busy and they're coming in for a lecture, dropping in, that sort of thing. So I don't know. No university, as far as I know, has found wonderful strategies for engaging international and local students in common dialogue yet. And we need to. I mean there's a lot of rhetoric about the wonderful things they do, and this and that, and bring culture to the campus. But it's all superficial.
R Yes absolutely.
C So we have to get beyond that superficiality I think.
R And engaging students in the broader community? Would you see that as a function of the university?
C Yes. Well, we sort of have things like that. I mean UWA was talking about some sort of program for engaging international students possibly in voluntary programs, that sort of thing, but it has to be basically a mixing of face to face with both groups of students, or if not in both, because they are so amorphous now there's no such thing as international or local, they're mixed all over the place. But there has to be more cross fertilisation I think.

R And any thoughts about how that would work? I am sure you have had thoughts about it.
C We have tried to do the mentor scheme at one point, but they take money. They take people behind them to keep them going. U, you know a real mentor scheme where you have local and international students mixing that might be one way. You could involve students in community events, but again that needs money and time, and people to do these things. They won't do them by themselves.
R And there's no time or money in universities?
C There is some, there is some but whether it's enough or whether it's well directed, I don't know. And we can't do everything. We've even tried the mentor scheme but we couldn't keep up. We've got enough to do on the strictly language side of things.
R So who would handle that mentoring arrangement in universities?
C Well we've got an area called 'start', that's for new arrival students. They look after orientation, first year students, and so on. That could go there. There are other structures within faculties where they have strictly non academic stuff.
R The problem with doing it within faculties is the randomness of it.
C The other thing is, it's been my belief, that the only way you're really going to get it to work is if you embed it in teaching and learning, so then people can't get away from it. So we still don't for example, group work, I would Force students to be mixed, but I would explain to students why I'm doing it, how I'm doing it and so on. And when I've interviewed students, the international students, they've said they want to be forced; they used the word forced, to be in mixed groups. Because they know it's much easier with their friends, but they also know they are not going to improve their English. So I think it's something that has to come in teaching and learning, or it won't happen. Because the extras are always going to be extra, and people generally if they are very busy they won't go into that anyway. So the only way we can get that mix is if we do it through the teaching classroom. And that means staff development. Because I could do it, because I know a bit more about it, but someone who teaches accounting may not know all that stuff.
R And would you get resistance, do you think, to that notion?
C Well you'd have to be careful how you implemented it, I guess. Resistance from whom? Staff or students?
R Staff. Well, let's look at it. Would you get resistance from staff? Content academics, say?
C Some do. Some still believe you've got to let groups choose themselves. You know, in the real world this is how it works, and this and that. But you know I think sometimes it's a bit of a copout myself.

R It doesn't work like that in the real world.
C Yeah, yeah. And they say if students go to the lecture and say we're not getting on, and so and so is a dunce, they say, 'well you've got to work it out'. That's the real world. I say well no, it's not quite the real world.
R No.
C So it could be. I think you always have to start with staff who are more receptive. Some students, some local students, might originally resent that. I've developed a workshop for students...what did I call it...'Working in Multinational Teams' and I ran it as part of my PHD, and I tried it on two halves of a class and what we found is that if students are told what you are trying to do, and are told, treated like adults actually, about why we are doing this, they actually quite like it. And they do realise they've learned a lot more about cultures, other cultures and languages and so on.
R I would think though in a business school where internationalisation is a thrust, that there are real benefits for students. They would be able to see the benefits.
C Yeah, but there's always some resistance. Some local students really resist. "I have to rewrite this. What they did wasn't good enough'. When I did my case study for my PHD we had two halves of the class and we told them both it was about group work which it was, a team work, but we didn't tell them one lot um, had to differentiate ? One lot got the workshop which was all about cultural diversity and how you can make it work, and one lot got a workshop that was all about working in groups, just generically. And the one with the language and culture stuff ended up being much more sensitive, we found out through interviews afterwards, much more sensitive. They actually didn't get the top marks which worried me at first, but when we interviewed them they said it was the best experience, 'we learned about this, we learned about that'. And what happened in the groups that got the high marks was that you got one alpha female dominating and saying 'this is crap and I'm just going to put in my stuff. I want a good mark,' and it wasn't really a group experience in the end. And that was interesting and we never would have picked that up through the surveys, we picked it up through interviews.
R That's very interesting, alpha female.
C Yeah, in this case they were two alpha females in two groups, and they were the ones that got top marks, and the girls said 'yeah, their stuff was crap that they produced, I wanted an A, and we didn't want to put that in. And we didn't put that in'. That sort of thing.
R Interesting
C Yeah.
R Alright, let's look at the language component now. What sort of minimum language level do you think international students should have so they can engage effectively in Australian education?
C Well we've just raised the level to 6.5 IELTS, but as you know, people come in all sorts of other ways.
R Yeah
C So 6.5 might be reasonable. The point I think that people have to get is it's not so much what they come in with; it's what do you then support them with. Because they require support all along. And so, you have to have a minimum standard, absolutely. Because I think if you bring them in too low you are really killing these kids. They're doing everything they can to try to pass and I know of a few cases in the past who've been driven to suicide so I think you should have a minimum standard and I think you should adhere to it ...but I think one of our staff, Katy Dunworth, who developed the new English ....she did some surveys and I think only about 16% had come in with IELTS. And it's the same in other unis. So they come in through all sorts of other pathways which aren't tested. That's always a problem.
R So, my next question. Some students come with a 5, or a 5.5 and use language programs as pathways, so what's your view of that?
C Well officially, no students come in at 5.5. They all come in 6.5 minimum or through other pathways that supposedly match that 6.5 or 6 minimum.

R But some of them come in, as we know, with a 5.5 and MIGHT do 8 weeks (language training) and they're never going to progress a full IELTS point in eight weeks.
C So I think you are setting them up to fail in some cases. I think it's quite worrying.
R So universities – and I'm talking broadly, I'm not talking about this one – are setting students up to fail by allowing them to come through pathways.
C Well they're not necessarily setting them up to fail, but they are setting them up to have a hell of a hard time. Even the students coming from our pre-tertiary colleges and pathways, struggle. And even when they pass, we've noticed a trend that they pass around the 50s all the time.
R Low passes all the time?
C So it's very hard.
R So they're not really managing effectively. They're just scraping through.
C They're scraping through in some cases, yeah.
R Alright, what would you do about changing that though, if you could?
C Well you could make post-entry language assessment compulsory. So then you could have, devise a test – it doesn't have to be very complex. I mean, unofficially we used to do it in the faculty where we got all the students, a core unit, 700 students, and we did a diagnostic task. So they wrote half a page, three quarters of a page on what problems you expect to meet at Curtain, for example, u8ndertaking your degree. And you can tell in that much, you can tell whether they are going to have problems or not. Language people can.
R And so what do you do with them then?
C Well then you make provisions. Then you offer things they have to take, like an academic writing module. So and most universities now are starting to implement post-entry language assessments – PELAs – and I think that's one way of trying to get over the pathways entry. But it has to be followed up with something. There's no use doing it and then nothing happens, you know. It's ridiculous.
R And do universities have the resources to do something, you know, when they do the PELTA programs?
C Well they are going to have to, aren't they? Laughs. That's what TEXTA 's (?) saying. TEXA's saying they have to. So I think TEXA is going to be looking at this more closely.
R Alright, still on language and looking at how they enter Australian universities. IELTS seems to be the main language competence tool.
C For a minority, yeah.
R Well for the pathways, they still have to have an IELTS test at some point before they even go into a pathway. But do you think IELTS is the best way of testing an international student's language capacity?
C I think, as I said to you, Post entry language assessment can be very very simple. A diagnostic task – well that wouldn't necessarily diagnose their speaking. But uni English for example can even diagnose their speaking. It has the capacity. No, I don't think it has to be IELTS. Because it is just one instrument. It has been going for some years, it has some validity and reliability, and so on. But it's not very hard for language specialists to work out some easy diagnostic task. So I don't think it has to be IELTS where you pay $300 a pop.
R But that's post entry. They need some standard pre-entry. So what's the standard pre-entry>
C Well the pre-entry is 6.5, IELTS 6.5. But then they have all sorts of other arrangements. So then the arrangement might be a year 12 equivalent from this university or that school. And there are hundreds of those for all universities. It's very complex. I don't know what you do about that. That's why post-entry is the easiest way to get over all of that, all of those differences and say you will be tested for this one. I think it's probably the easiest way.
R It's a very good point. Trying to stop all those pathway programs.
C Not stop them, but trying to get an idea of...
R Well I guess exit testing post completion of those pathways would give you an inconsistent result anyway. OK but IELTS is the one that they hang their hat on. Do you think

there's a correlation between an IELTS score and an international student's ability to complete tertiary studies?

C Well there have been some studies done. Katie has done that here at Curtain. IELTS and other entry pathways and she found that yeah, if you had a 6.5 or a 6 you had a reasonably good chance of getting through an undergrad degree. Whereas some of our colleges or pathways, they were scraping through. So she found some differences. And I think there have been some other studies done, I can't remember off the top of my head. But these we've done at curtain were recent.

R OK. I'll need to talk to Katie .... I heard her present at the ALL conference.

C I can give you her numbers and email, if you like.

R Thank you. Ah, just moving on to the academic environment now. I think we've dealt with this first one, the pathways. Do you think Chinese students have a difference approach to study, I mean, do you find them passive rote learners? I think your most recent paper challenges that.

C No, I don't think they are passive rote learners. I think they are – I think they are rote learners in the sense that they have done a lot of that in the past. I don't think they are passive, I think they are reluctant, reluctant to speak out, worried about asking questions. But once they understand they have to do this to get marks. I mean, we used to have, we don't know, but we used to have a participation mark, which meant you had to ask questions, they used to force themselves to do those things because they wanted the marks. So I don't think. .I mean if they are used to different learning styles, I think they very quickly pick up what they have to try to do here.

R One of the things I found when I was teaching was this notion of critical thinking. Not being, their not being comfortable with critical thinking. They're used to being told what the answers are, and the notion that there's more than one correct answer is quite challenging at first. Is that an area where you find, personally, that Chinese students struggle?

C Well where I've seen them most have been in workshops and our workshops are very interactive, and we all do it sometimes even fun topics, so we have a subject called 'speaking out' so we usually have them debating in two halves. And I found when I was taking those classes that they enjoyed all that. When it was explained to them how it was going to work, the rules of the kind of debating thing, then the questions and this and that. I think they lack the skills, in English, not necessarily in Chinese. But it is a different listening style. But they just have to get used to it. But we don't teach them all that, it all happens I guess by osmosis. So three years later they might crack the code and then they're out. (both laugh)

R So those analytical skills?

C This is where our cab ...Critical Analysis and Business...I decided at one point was that we needed to do was structure it ... so they understand it. And sometimes with ESL learners I think you have to make the structure very very obvious. So that's what we've done. I'll give you the outline of that because it's quite.... that's what we do in those. That's a 9 week module that we do. So we really start off with some sort of structure of what, and then you do the why, and then you do the evaluation of whatever. But we take them through structured texts. So we say look what this text says, then we are going to evaluate what this text says, and so on. And we take them through a series of structured classes. So I think with ESL learners in general, not just Chinese learners, sometimes you have to make the structure obvious.

R More explicit than you would for domestic students?

C Yes, yes. If it's not explicit they don't necessarily pick it up.

R How do they respond to it?

C Well I think everyone who takes that module really loves it. I don't know whether they're mostly Chinese, but in our case we have mostly Chinese here anyway. They're quite a few of those. I haven't taught it for the last two semesters but I sort of set it up with one of my colleagues then left them to run it.

R It looks like a very good outline to lead them through that whole critical thinking model.
It may seem like an obvious question, but what you think are the main, the major issue for international students. I mean is it language, or is it something more?
C Oh it's language and culture, definitely. Not just language. And it's social, psychological, all those things I think. I mean, language is a big one, but it's not the only one.
R So, international students' lack of cultural understanding. It's a major impediment, would you call it?
C I think anyone who goes somewhere else has to read the cultural context. And sometimes we help them to do this, and sometimes we don't. So it takes them probably a lot longer than it needs to. Um, because we don't really, we talk about how you enrol in this unit, how you withdraw, about this, that, but there are all sorts of subtle cultural things that you don't even think of until you come across them.
R I mean, the program I was principal of in China was a foundation program for 27 different Australian universities and the focus there was very much giving them the language but also trying to build up their cultural understanding before they hit here – and it worked. The feedback that I've had is that they felt much more comfortable with some of the things and they were able to think back, when they got here, and say, 'oh that's what that was about'. So would you think a compulsory foundation course like that would be useful for international students?
C I think so, I think they definitely need that cultural reading of the context. It's a big thing, um, and we do bits of it. Like, we've got what we call articulation students, so they're coming from universities in China into the second or third year of our accounting degree. Rosie can tell you about those. And we're getting in touch with her. And we are doing an orientation for them, and a little bit of that is cultural as well as ...but really it's not just the linguistic. Even the linguistic is dependent on the culture. Yeah, so I think some sort of compulsory element would be good. But then you have to worry about whether you charge them extra, whether they come four weeks earlier, those things.
R Yeah, there are all those sorts of issues. There is one other question I would like to ask you which relates not so much to international students so much as domestic students. And you know their world has changed considerably over the last little while. Are there issues for domestic students which have large cohorts of international students?
C There certainly are with group assignments. We see lots of that. There's a lot of dissatisfaction around. Some local students think they are being disadvantaged by having to work in a group blah blah. Some of them actually break through that sort of stereotype to some extent and really enjoy it, once they meet.
But generally what's happening with local students is that they are not staying at uni. They're dropping in and out. They're coming in for the lecture and going, coming in for the tute and going, so they're not really engaging with the place, whereas international students tend to come in and stay all day. So it's actually a problem getting the students together. The local students may be working part time and they're in and out, in and out, in and out, so they're not really engaging with the international students. I think that's a real problem. (NOTE: Catherine is describing two different universities really ... make something of this?)
R It's been a problem I've heard domestic students say, 'oh my lecturers are dumbing down the course.'
C Yeah, we get that occasionally.
R And your response to that?
C Well they haven't told us but we hear that's what they think are happening. I think yeah, in a way you can't blame....in a way some of the lecturers ... they haven't got the linguistic skills to sort of engage both groups, but that ideally should be what's happening. Um.. Yeah, it's not all students, but some students definitely complain about that. Also, you know, we have to do this joint assignment and the writing's terrible from the other student blah blah. Why do we have to have mixed groups? That sort of thing. I think whatever you do, you've got to put groundwork into it. So you've got to get both groups ready to

understand that they are learning from each other. Not just one way. Some Aussie students feel that they are giving and not receiving

R Absolutely

C Whereas when we did the workshop what they did understand in the end was that they were both giving and receiving different things, and I think that's important to get that across.

R Actually I think that's a really important point that you are making there, that that groundwork is critical.

Personal experience?

C Mmmm

R Personal experience, and for this, just what you've experienced because you've had a long career as a teacher and then moving into government and into university. All of the students in my paper, all of them in my study, recount instances of cheating, plagiarism, others doing papers for them or people they know, or their being approached. What's your personal experience of that?

C We get sent...students who are caught for plagiarism are sent to us from the Office of the Dean of Students. I've been here 13 years at CBS, and of those who've been sent to us, I'd say about under 10 I would have thought were plagiarising. The others I'd say didn't know what the hell they were doing. Laughs.

R So it's...

C So I've found you really need to explain the whole...and this idea that they will know, or they will know because it's written somewhere, or it's written somewhere on line, what it means. They haven't got a clue, some of them. There are a few cases, or where someone is deliberately cheating, but a lot of cases they don't know how to quote, they don't know how to cite, they don't know what we mean.

R It's a cultural thing, coming in.....

C Well yes and no. It's also just experience in academic writing. Some of them have never written anything before they come here, even in second or third year

R But in China....

C (continues) they've done accounting.

R (continues) the idea of taking someone else's ideas is?

C Is okay

R Yes, exactly so. But from your personal experience, have you had that? Have you picked up a paper and thought, 'I've read that before?' Or...

C Well we can tell when they are plagiarised. Because you'll get three sentences of totally (laughs) broken English, and then you'll get a perfect paragraph, and then you'll get you know, so what I usually say to students is, 'you realise you have to reference anything you take from books blah blah blah. Is this taken straight from a text?' And they say 'a little bit' whatever. "Well if it's exact words you need the page number and the year blah blah blah.' So we do it that way. We don't say 'you've plagiarised' so much. But we say, 'if you take it from an author you have to do this, you have to do that. You have to acknowledge it in that sense.'

R I have one student in my study who came with an IELTS 5.5, did an undergraduate degree, a masters at the University of new south Wales, and then tested at an IELTS 5.5 when she sat her immigration test. Four years in Australia. Have you ever experienced anything like that?

C No, not personally, but I know from reading that they say a lot of students who come in with a 6, they don't improve. It's very hard to get that 6.5. There's a sort of threshold they reckon at 6, where students stagnate and generally from what I've read. There's no way they can improve unless they mix with locals and talk to locals and practise their English. And the lecturers say to them, 'oh you've got to talk English when b you're home in your apartment', and of course there are five Chinese students. Why would they speak English? And anyone who does Linguistics thinks this is okay, but they won't do it. It doesn't come naturally. So they have to try and mix. And this is very hard to sort of structure at a university.

R Do you find working in this field can sometimes be frustrating? I mean, what are the frustrations of working in this field?
C I actually love it ....Laughs ... um, frustrating. I think sometimes when people don't understand ... for example, when we kept saying...One year, I was testing students in a post entry assessment, we did it three years in a row, we got all our stats together, compared blah blah. Then I said to my boss, 'That's it. We're not doing this anymore'. And he said 'why? This is wonderful.' And I said, 'no it's not. You and the executive will not make anything compulsory as a result. We know what percentage are at the lower end that would need support. We're saying we can offer them 'this', and you're saying 'no it can't be compulsory'. 'We are not doing it any more.' And we didn't. So you have those sorts of frustrations . Um, but I actually find the area quite rich and exciting. Because there's so much you can research and do. And, yeah. I guess with my team in particular we are always pretty careful about being kind to students and erring on the other side of being too kind rather than harsh, even if you suspect there is plagiarism. Um, yeah, we ....and occasionally if one of us picks up there's a fragile student we send a quick email and say if you get this student just be careful , he or she is very fragile' sometimes we walk them down to counselling, that sort of thing. . Yeah, you sort of do pick up more than just language. They tell you all sorts of other things.
R I suppose when I was talking about frustrations, I wasn't talking about the job specifically and the interaction, I mean in the organisation for example, do you feel supported.
C We are very well supported in the sense that I started here as a one person show and I've always been able to show that the numbers have been increasing, so we need to do this and that, and so on. So I've been very well supported. Just I suppose politics, politics happens everywhere. And so you will get someone who won't see the point of what we are trying to say or do. And that can be frustrating. But the actual work with students is fascinating. Yeah.
R It is. Just one thing I wanted to move on to. All of the students in my case study wanted permanent residence, it was a real motivator. Yet the government keeps changing the rules and that's having a significant impact. Are you aware ... do students talk to you about PR.?
C They do occasionally
R Is it an issue for them, why they are hear?
C No, but they did tell us, particularly for masters, they do talk to us occasionally about PR, but it hasn't been a big factor in my case. I know that the School of Accounting was very worried that once the rules changed the numbers might drop, and I don't think they have actually.
R Universities would talk to government about migration rules.
C I think....like we have a central international office and a central DVC international, and I think his office talks to government, but we don't. At this level.
R Alright. I've got one final question. In a perfect world, OK this is a perfect world where there's no lack of money or resources or will or anything else. How would you restructure international education to provide a better outcome for all students? Does it need a restructure? How would you do it or would you tweak it?
C I think the first thing I would do would be more staff development. Of all staff. Um, I think we're actually pretty good. I think Aussies are pretty tough on themselves. I think compared with other countries, I don't think we do it too badly. Um, I think I'd like to see a lot more staff development, so that ... I mean staff know the issues in their classroom and they are frustrated they are getting these shonky assignments that are all over the place, so they are aware of the issues but they don't know how to tackle those. In the sense of having a service like ours, that's good because they can refer students to us and we can help them, you know, wherever or how ever we can. Yeah, I think staff and student development. I think you have to develop students as well, to be aware of what's involved. And that's local and international students. And staff. I think you've got to make people.....and I think it has to happen a lot more at teaching and learning, apart from apart from it.
R So how would that work?

C Well this is what I say. I would deliberately have mixed teams all the time, and induct them into how to work in multinational teams. That sort of thing. So that it has to be that you educate all the time as you go. I mean our students are really adults but we don't treat them as such. We say okay we are doing this because it's good for you and this is what we hope you'll learn from it, that sort of thing. I don't think we do enough of that. Someone, I can't think of the paper, Crossling, have you read that?

R No I haven't

C Crosling, she's worth reading. Crosling I think it's Glenda, no Brenda, Crosling, she's written some interesting stuff there on some group work thing where they prepared students and so on... I am not sure if she's at Macquarie or somewhere else. I can't remember. I think it's got to be in the end, the extracurricular stuff is good and it's necessary of course, but if it doesn't happen in teaching and learning it doesn't happen in the bulk of the time in the year, or online, or whatever.

R OK so that's the biggest .

C So if you are really going to do it you have to do it in the teaching and learning, and the other stuff would support all of that.

R OK ...that's it. I've got all my two and a half pages of questions and all the little notes on the side. Is there anything I missed that you think is important that you'd like to add?

C I'm just trying to think. I read something about the third wave of internationalisation, what we needed to.

Oh yeah, the other thing that I sometimes go on about is that um, we've got to see internationalisation across the world as normal. So we're no longer catering to special groups, this and that, everybody, and that's why we need to cater for local students as well as international. And that's where we are. This is where the whole world is. They're studying all over the world; they're coming here so that this sort of mixture has got to be regarded as normal, not special. Almost not needing any special measures but it does, gradually, til it becomes normalised. But it has to be regarded as not unusual. Not that people regard it as unusual, but they think, oh yeah, I've got to remember to think about those international students. It's got to be part of normal thinking. So when we do something it's got to be for a diverse audience, really.

R And that comes back to teaching and learning. Very much. The ball's in their court it seems, isn't it? That's great.

Transcript, Bryan, ALL instructor/practitioner

R: Can you describe your job and the work you are doing as it relates to international students from China?

B Yes, ah, so I am one of four lecturers involved in running a large program for international students, and a lot of them being from China, and the way it is set up is those students come to the university, enrol in their degree, and if they're not, if they haven't passed certain levels of, well basically IELTS, then they have to take the program that I am involved in and that program exists in all of the major elements of the university. So there's a health strand, things like nursing and psychology and social work, a business strand – so that includes all the major business disciplines, economics, accounting, marketing and so on, then there's the science, engineering, environment and technology strand and finally arts and social sciences strand. So there's four courses which look to enhance the students' academic language and literacy ability in whichever field of those four the students are doing their degree in. So they take a course that I or one of the other lecturers runs as part of their degree. That's where it's a bit different from what's going on in other unis.

R So that's a compulsory program?

B Yeah.

R And that's if they come with an IELTS less than what...6.5?

B Yeah, the criteria's sort of you know detailed, but basically they would have to have a 7 on everything in IELTS to not to be in it.

R OK, so why did the university think, or why did you recommend this to the university? Why was it necessary?

B Well the uni set it up, so the background to my employment on it is I and my two other, three other colleagues were brought in after the fact. So the university convened a large working party and came up with this model. The way, well the reason I understand they set it up was that they believed that for a start, the way to deal with the issue of international students and academic learning is to redress language in its so-called discipline-specific nature, although these courses are across several disciplines, it's more sort of a general field specific I guess. So that's one thing, they wanted the students to be studying the language of their discipline. They did want it to be compulsory, because at most universities there's various mechanisms where students can study this sort of thing but it's either not compulsory and therefore you have low uptake or it happens to some extent before they enter their degree so it's not concurrent with what they're studying. And they also wanted something that would be in the first year and preferably in the first semester of a degree, so it would also sort of set them up for learning through their degree.

R So I'm assuming that it's not just language that you deal with but maybe some elements of academic study that maybe some students who come from overseas countries may not be au fait with?

B That's right. So there's the sort of academic culture, acclimatising to academic culture issue, which we address through the course and try just to give them just I guess generic skills to survive at university. But we are cognisant of the fact that the generic study skills side of thing is catered for already through various mechanisms such as your learning services unit and so on. And a lot of people have taken courses already in that kind of stuff before they come to university so if you do too much on that stuff students can get quite bored. (Laughs). So the main focus is we're trying to make the main focus discipline-specific language.

R So how long has this program been running?

B Ah, it's now been going for two and a half years. It started at the beginning of 2010.

R And are there any measurable outcomes?

B Well we've got various projects going to look at the outcomes but to be honest it's very hard to (door opens)

Continues: We're talking about outcomes. I'll come to what we are doing in a minute, but first the background to that. We've found it's very hard to come up with any mechanisms that clearly measure the outcomes because the various sort of tests you can put in place don't really test what we are doing. But...you know for example there's a large research program going on where a cohort of students who came through the university (relate to Jones' comment about Griffith) before this existed were all given an IELTS test at the beginning of their first semester and the end of their first semester of university and the idea is that they will be tested again as they leave the university and then the same process done for students who take this program and then compare, but then the program isn't teaching them to IELTS so whether in fact it's an effective mechanism is another matter.

R Yeah, that whole question of IELTS is an effective measure is something we'll come to later. Look, do you do any language testing on exit from this program. What sort of assessment do they do when they've done their semester course?

B Well they're assessed in the course, you know, like any other university course. Do you want me to go into the details of that?

R Yeah, if you would.

B Well there are four elements to the assessment, one is an oral presentation project and it's fairly you know, in line with university courses, so there's an oral presentation, there's an assessment of their writing for a portfolio, what we call a portfolio. The main part of that being a research essay which has various stages with formative feedback at the various stages before the final product and a couple of other writing tasks in that portfolio. What else? Tutorial participation. There's a complex way of assessing that, but they're assessed for coming to and participating in the tutorials, and there's a final exam which involves writing an essay in exam conditions and questions about the course. So there's four elements of assessment there. And there's also testing of students in relation to the project I mentioned before. Not all students ... there's exit testing from the university using IELTS.

R Do you see any appreciable difference when they've done the course?

B To be honest, there's not a huge difference being picked up in IELTS.

R Because you're not teaching to IELTS?

B Yeah, I think that's to be expected.

R Are you?

B So, that's a point of discussion.

R Do you feel yourself that students come out of the course appreciably more prepared for their academic work?

B Ah, I think they do. Well it's a very complex question. I mean, yes, the course is beneficial, put it that way. But there's also factors mitigating against its success. One is, for example, the,....well I should mention students take a lecture and a tutorial every week for the course for the semester so there's a 2 hour lecture, in inverted commas, lecture, an interactive kind of learning experience but it's called a lecture, and a tutorial. So the tutorial is assessed for compulsory attendance. But you can't do that for practical reasons in the lecture. As a result there's a hellava lot of students that just stop turning up to the lecture. So you've got a huge body of students who are actually only attending probably half the course and therefore the effectiveness is dramatically reduced because of that. See what I mean?

R Yeah, yeah I do.

B Um, and another issue is the, um, this issue of discipline specificity. The course, the effectiveness of the course is constrained by it having to teach into lots of different disciplines. So the vbusiness course, some students from marketing, some from accounting, some from hotel management, so what is the discourse of each one of those? They're not the same.

R Yeah, the business brand.. um, that's a fairly high umbrella, isn't it?

B Yeah, that's right. And if you think of science, engineering, environment, technology, all being in one room, well there's about five different engineerings, for a start. Let alone mixing IT and all these things. So.....the effectiveness is blunted by all the inability for it to be truly discipline specific. But for practical reasons and financial reasons I believe it's very hard for the university to get more specific.

R Can I just ask you though, is this part of a broader strategy?
B Yes.
R So what is the broader strategy?
B The broader strategy is called GELES...Griffith English Language Enhancement Strategy...and partly where that is coming from....well the University, pre 2010, you know seeing that a strategy had to be put in place for obvious reasons ... well the reasons every other university ..so the government itself as in the federal education department – DEWA – put out several documents around 2008 and 9, such as the Good Practice Principles document which is quite well discussed which one of the big recommendations from that period and those documents is that universities should have a university-wide top down strategy for dealing with the issues of language proficiency of international students so that this university to its credit has tried to put in a university-wide, top-down model as opposed to bottom up, ad hoc, lots of different strategies going on.
R So what else is in the strategy?
B Other parts of the strategy are what's called English Help, which is a one to one consultation service only for international students, um, another thing is IELTS for Grads, which is students having, being able to take a discounted IELTS exam at graduation. Um, part of the motivation being that students have some evidence oaf perhaps improved proficiency leaving university ..laughs....let me thing, English, Help, IELTS for Grads, the EL program, we've got um, art student links is the other big one. That is a student socialisation program, so a way of trying to link students up with other students from outside their nationality or language group
R So is that successful?
B The main arms of the language strategy.
R So that's all good, so all running together?
B So all running together, all coordinated together. We all work with each other but with the different arms.
R So who coordinates that?
B There's not really one person in charge of it. Ultimately it's the DVC Academic who oversees it all and funds all of that.
R OK
B We have people in charge of each of those arms and we all work together as a committee. And there is a sort of senior group within the university called the English Language Working Party, and that's where most senior people within the uni who have anything to do with English language policy come together.
R OK so it's run out of the DVC's office. Can we just step back and just think about the students you have coming here, particularly the Chinese students. What sort of minimum language level do you think international students should have so they can engage effectively in the Australian education environment? Just, you know, I know there are different levels for different disciplines, but say for a business student or an arts student. In your personal view.
B Do you want me to quote IELTS levels, or just describe?
R Yeah, because IELTS permeates the whole thing, so iuf you could describe an IELTS level. What level do you think students could come, what IELTS level, and participate fully in the experience.
B Well it's a little bit hard to exactly pinpoint the exact IELTS level in the sense that we are always dealing with students who are around more that sort of 6, 6.5 level, and they in my opinion are not equipped, so higher than that. But what exactly, I am not exactly sure because i couldn't tell you for example if an 8 is, how super duper they are, because we so rarely deal with them. Laughs.
I mean, if all economic imperatives were put aside and you just wanted to have students who could study and not have any problems then you would be, I would guess more up around the 7.5/8 stratosphere, because even when I deal with 7s they seem to me to be still struggling quite significantly.
R But that comes back to the IELTS test. We'll come back to that.

B Yeah, the IELTS test. I wouldn't rather not, use that as the way of describing them but ...
R Yeah, but it's the way universities....it's what we've got. So, we've looking at something higher than a 6.5, so what you are saying in effect is that students who come in at 6.5, the language isn't generally high enough?
B No.
R No. Alright. Well let's get on with the really tricky one. Some students come with a five, or a five point five, and they use language programs as pathways into tertiary study. What do you make of that?
B Well, definitely is the case. And, um, one obviously wishes it was not the case. But I can understand why it is happening.
R What do you mean, you can understand why it is happening.
B I mean, it's happening for reasons of revenue production, so if I'm just being cold-hearted realist about what's going on in the Australian system, that's what's happening.
R OK but if you look at a student who's coming say to Macquarie University, who comes with an ielts 5, and goes into the language program there, why not keep them in the language program until they hit the 6.5 or 7 barrier. I mean why push them through? Because my understanding is that when they come through those programs they don't get tested again in terms of IELTS. They might do some internal testing, but if it's a matter just of revenue, why not keep them in the language schools until they can get those language levels.
B I think the problem is that the majority would take an eternity to get there. So to move from a 5, 5.5 to being able to really um, function successfully as an undergraduate academic so to speak, um I think would take a period that would be counted in the years, not the months. So it's not a product you could ever sell to anyone. So basically what they are doing, universities are competing with each other to sell their products.
R So it's a marketing issue?
B It's impossible to say come here and spend...I mean it could take, some people think it could take 5, six years...
R Particularly if they don't come to classes...just come for the parts that are assessed. Well, looking at it then, students come in with a 5, 5.5 ... and I have a great example of a student who came with a 5, and in my view is barely a five now, but he's got his piece of paper and his PR, no job, but he's still there ... I mean, do universities generally provide enough support for international students do you think? I mean, just talking broadly.
B Um, that's hard a question. I think universities, I think most universities are probably providing a lot of support, but the actual amount of support needed is massive. So it's kind of a relative thing. It's not that the universities are not providing anything. They are...providing quite a lot. And spending quite a lot of money on it. But to actually get someone around a 5.5 or even a 6 or even a 6.5 level through, you would need a massive amount of support. I mean you would need like an adjunct tutorial for every single course running where students who are below a certain level would have to be taking an additional tute.
R That then becomes, if universities are pushing these students through as a revenue earner, you provide those extra ....
B It becomes counter-productive.
R Alright, so...
B It's probably similar to lots of issues in Australia, such as mental health or disability. You can say, 'is there enough support?'. On the one hand you can say no, because obviously tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of people in terrible circumstances out there, but on the other hand you could say that the government is spending x million dollars on it, so it's not that they aren't doing anything, but to solve ... you would have to spend so much money that .. you know.
R OK....so perhaps the issue is, I seem to hear the issue is that a lot of these resources are being provided but the students don't come. They don't hear about them, they don't come, they stay within their Chinese cohort, they live Chinese lives here. So one of the things

you've talked about is the social networking program. But that doesn't seem to be happening widely.

B I am not sure. I gather most universities have some kind of program. It might be running very small scale or not very effectively....

R So do there need to be more compulsory programs to force students ok, if you come here with this language level it will be compulsory for you to do this, you will need to sign up, and maybe make sure students are in lectures? I don't know....

B Yeah, well we're you may have heard me talk about that topic and we are certainly experimenting here with a lot of compulsory programs. ... so the course is compulsory, for one thing. The tut, going to at least the tut is compulsory for this course, so they have to turn up to at least half. And then we have assignments within the course, so that you have to do certain things. I am not sure if this is the talk of mine you saw, but one of the talks I gave at Adelaide was about the project we have within our program where the students learn about all the major support services at the university, and they have to go to one and actually write a report about their attendance at it, as one of their written reflections in their portfolio. So we are looking at that as one way of you know, dealing with the problem that there's all this support service but no one actually accesses them. I am not sure even whether that's going to work, because maybe they are just going to do it to get the assignment done and then never never go again.

R Yeah, it's hard. You can lead a horse to water, as they say.

B And I wouldn't .... I lived overseas in an Asian country myself for many years and I know that at the end of the day it is very hard to spend all your time or the majority of your time even with people from another cultural group or another language group, because inevitably you retreat back to that group. You have to feel safe in that, and that's the only way that ultimately you can feel comfortable . I think it's easy, and all our research we are doing here shows that students are um, you know hanging out with people from their own group. And they even say it themselves. We've done a series of focus group interviews and they are highly critical of their own behaviour. They are not, not aware of it. But it's unrealistic...it's just human nature to want to speak to someone of your own language group. And how's a Chinese student going to hang out with a bunch of drunken Aussies in a share house. I mean, it's never going to happen. They'd be there for two weeks before they'd be looking for a new place to live because the behaviour is so alien to them.

R That's exactly so. And you know one of my students said this, he said 'Aussies go to parties. We don't know what to do at a party'.

B That's right. And I've been to parties in Japan where I was living and it was highly uncomfortable if you didn't know what to do, and how to talk, and you see everyone start drinking and and laughing their heads off and you start to feel incredibly alone at a party so, after a while you try to get out of going to a party. And it's the total opposite of what you should be doing.

R OK so that comes back to this question of , pause, in the pre-university program that I taught up in Beijing, we very much focussed on the culture and tried to give them some information about the culture. I mean offering something like that, some ongoing cultural awareness training, for want of a better word, is that one of the solutions?

B Well I think that's a useful thing to do and I probably should have mentioned that another part of the ... strategy...there's a number of intercultural workshops that students take, but again I think students take them, and you can make them compulsory as well, and students go along and they learn all that, but still there's kind of a so what factor. Like when I lived in Japan, I did know the cultural really well, but it didn't mean you could become more functioning. I mean, what are you going to do? Become Japanese? You maybe get better at dealing with it but your own way of doing things is so ingrained in you that I think it's very hard to convert across. So, students will come more aware, they'll make more of an effort, but it's probably unrealistic to think they will jump across to a different way of thinking.

R Yeah, and unrealistic to think a native speaker students are going to embrace international students in small tut groups and what have you when they just want to get on,

get it over, and having an international student with bad language skills in that environment is difficult for domestic students ... unfortunately.
B Mmm, yes.
R Alright, let's move on. And if we talk about this whole question of IELTS, because it is the test that lets them come here, that gives them a visa, or not, gives them a university place, or not. Do you think it's the best way of testing international students' language capacity?
B Um,
R Just their language capacity now, as opposed to their capacity for engaging in tertiary study.
B I don't know if it is the best available, it may well be. I don't really pretend to be an assessment expert to be honest, but when we say is it the best, if you answer no to that, there has to be something out there better. It's obviously in an ideal world there are better way to do it. So discipline specificity for example is one thing. In an ideal world, if someone wants to come to Australia to study chemical engineering then you would have an exam of the academic language of chemical engineering and that would say involve not only written, but reading and writing within that discipline. Even how you exchange information verbally in a tutorial in that discipline. But these things are so, they're never going to happen. So IELTS is so by default a way, and the important thing is people do not start believing that it is an accurate predictor of success. And I think IELTS themselves don't say that.
R Well that's the difference isn't it. I was just going to move on to that. So we have IELTS as a test of language which stands here, but IELTS as a test of academic capacity or outcomes ...you're saying it's not a good measure?
B Well all these terms are relative. What the problem is, is the way people interpret the results. So IELTS is ***a*** measure. The problem is that people especially people who are not applied linguists or not in education start to affix sort of truth beliefs to those numbers so they think because to come to uni you need a 6.5, automatically a 6.5 means you're absolutely fine to be a university student. Now that's obviously wrong, and IELTS would even tell you it's not right, so the problem is not the IELTS test per se, it's the way it's being interpreted by stakeholders and so on. That's the issue.

R I come back to my Chinese students who you know you've lived in Asia, maybe Japan's different, but you know the students learn by rote, there's not a lot of critical thinking and what have you. I mean that seems to be a very big stumbling block when they get into any western education is having to, not being given the answer and then work back through the process, but told this is the process, find me the answer. How do you address that whole process of critical thinking?
B Well that's right. And going back to your question earlier about what level would be okay to set, that's one reason why I found that question hard to answer, because I even know from where I've got an international student as a PHD student, who's IELTS would be very high, that university's still difficult, and it usually comes down to that critical thinking issue. So they might be able to write quite well, and speak quite well, you know minor errors and so on, but there are still major problems because the student can't be trusted to go off, for example, you know come up with a chapter within 2 months for their PHD, they can't do that because they need their hand held at every step, because that's the education culture they've come from. I mean my understanding of what you would do in a PHD is you would discuss with me, the supervisor, the data and how you are going about getting it, then you would go out and do it, and you've already got some kind of analytical methodology as part of your technical makeup, so I might just say we might discuss some kind of nitty gritty of what you are going to do, but I am expecting you to come having sort of done it. It might not be the polished form, but you'll report back to me off your own have come up with the interesting insights and so on, but what I find with some international students is even with very ielts is that kind of process is beyond them, because that kind of process involves some kind of critical you know, Western style critical analysis. So the language is not the only thing.

R Do you have a Chinese student in that.....?
B Interrupts....Not actually Chinese, but I am sure it goes across, I'm talking non-English speaking background, but I'm talking from experience, it's the same thing. And that's why again, people must understand, they misinterpret IELTS. Just by bumping up the entry criteria, a lot of people think that would solve all their problems. It still wouldn't solve all their problems.
R Very much so. The same with migration, you're looking at language as a test, you make sure permanent residents can get jobs, the IELTS score is going to have to go a lot higher to guarantee that.
Just come back to the academic environment for a minute, we talked a few minutes ago about students who use pathways to get into universities, and they often do that with inadequate language skills. Has that been your experience? Have you encountered that? Give me some experiences....
B So students coming through pathways?
R Yeah, students coming with a 5, 5.5, do their mandatory language course, they come into classes but they are still very shaky with the language skills. Has that been your experience.
B Yes, yes, it's rife. I don't think there's any doubt about that. Laughs
There's no end of students who are in that situation and it's hard to sort of know what more to say about that. It's going on everywhere.
R And in a perfect world, obviously, you'd change that?
B Yes, in a perfect world they wouldn't be studying in credit bearing courses unless their language and critical thinking ability and so on was ready for it.
R But in a revenue starved academic environment, it's 'rife'? laughs
B I'm assuming that's the reason why it's going on. And you know academics themselves need to bear that in mind. It's easy for discipline academics to be complaining about it, and the general public, but the money has to come from somewhere. So either we are going to get more money out of the taxpayers' pocket and we don't have to do that, and people always whinge and whine about how many taxes they pay or , you know it's gotta come from somewhere. I think the discipline academics need to be aware of that. They could be out of a job, if those students weren't in their lecture theatre.
R It's a very good point. What do you personally think is the major issue or issues for international students. Is it the language or is it critical thinking capacity. I mean which is the harder?
B I don't know if I could put one above the other, um,
R Complementary?
B Yeah, I think both. It would be hard to rank one above the other, but definitely academic language and then beyond that discipline-specific language is very hard to master for anyone, even for domestic students. And then the, the kind of way of thinking, particularly for Chinese students, that's what they tell us as well. 'Ah it's a different way of thinking' comes in on top of that so definitely both are at play.
R OK so you were talking for a minute about domestic students, so conversely are there issues for domestic students having these large cohorts of international students in their lectures. I mean in their tutorials. There must be pros and cons, so what would you see as the pros and what would you see as the cons of that?
B The pros are that, yes, students are becoming more used to an international environment and that is very much the reality of the international workforce. Whether all of them are going to be in the international workforce, who knows, so to speak, but a commonplace stat we often here is that there are more people who speak English not as their first language than as their first language in the world, and that will continue to be the case even to a larger extent, so the person who is used to getting on with and interacting with people from all different countries in, with English as a lingua franca, that ability is a good ability to have, and Australia needs their graduates to have that ability. We can't go round as white-bread red-necks or we're, we're stuffed.

R Yeah, just the general population. Having that permeate through the general population is a very fine thing to have.
B Yes. I mean you know, I am one of those bleeding heart, you know greenies who despairs at the turn back the boats discourse and all of that crap so I would like us to be more, you know, just for it to be just a part of everyday life that the person sitting next to you is from somewhere else and you might be somewhere else in ten years as well, and that's just you know that's the modern world. So from that point of view, the classroom in the modern Australian university is a better place to be than it used to be.
Having said that, you know, it would be hard and it is hard to be in a class where the majority of people in the classroom are not capable of critical fast-flowing discussion of issues, then that's not going to be as dynamic an environment as you are hoping to get when you come to university so I think that's definitely a con. So....
R Would you say that universities are able to broaden the scope of their course offerings because of this international education. Is that something that's another pro, for example.
B When you say broaden the scope, what do you mean by that? More courses?
R More courses, more options, more areas of study, is that something that's broadened because of international education, or do you just see more students in accounting and IT perhaps.
B Um, well I guess that they can't survive without the students you know so it would be a smaller place without them. So clearly it would stand to reason that there would be a broader offering because of that. But I think that if I look at universities today from when I was an undergrad , there seems to be, you know the old thing of the sort of niche subject doesn't really exist anymore. So we we used to study things because we were interested in them. I mean I did Sanskrit for example in an Arts degree for one year, just because you could. You'd never be able to do that now. So everything is more future job oriented and money oriented and you're paying for it, all of that kind of thing.
R So education is more vocationally driven?
B More vocationally driven, yeah. So I think the scope has narrowed from that point of view. But there probably are ways in which it has broadened as well, if I thought about it.
R So what sort of change then, because if that, I can't imagine you were an undergrad too many years ago.
B I'm 43 so ... laughs...the eighties.
R Are you? It must be all that fish you ate in Japan. So if that was still the environment in the eighties....?
B Well I'm the last generation, I'm the generation that straddled the big change, because I, in my last two years of undergrad HECS came in for the first time, so I'm exactly that generation where uni stopped being a totally free thing that you did without necessarily having to know what you're studying, why you're studying, job-wise, and then started to become an enterprise and that was obviously Dawkins and Keating, and once Howard came in and Costello, that went even further so we end up with the university we have today, the enterprise university, as they call it.
R Contradictory, isn't it. Enterprise university.
B Haha...so I kinda forgot what I was talking about now.
R We were talking about pros and cons and how the models changed since the eighties.
B. Yes it's changed.
R Alright, so we've talked about the lack of cultural understanding in another area and I think we've dealt with that, but let's just take a look at this final question when we're looking at the academic environment. Again, a perfect world sort of question. It's a big one. How would you restructure international education to deliver a better outcome for all students
B Ooohhhhh.....
R And is there something when you're sitting around at the end of the day that you and your colleagues talk about. If we could only do this, if we could only do that, it would be great, it would be better. The domestic students would be happy, the international students, the academics would all be happy.

B Mmmm.....
R Anything there?
B Well seeing it's an ideal world sort of question, so I'm allowed to talk ideally....um, so probably I would do two things if I were the emperor, and the first one is I think the higher education as a teaching, as a teaching profession, higher education has to be thought of as a teaching profession. And I know it sort of is. In the same way as being a high school teacher, you have to be able to teach. So the days of the boffin academic with a tweed jacket who can hardly communicate but writes a lot of books um, has to be rethought. Maybe that person can't teach. I mean if you can't teach, maybe you shouldn't be allowed to teach. So I would, I would you know once I become the emperor, I am going to say well now there has to be a qualification where you have to be able to teach before you are let loose in a lecture theatre or classroom. Because that would mean that instruction becomes better and a lot of .. I think a lot of academics can't handle the diversity of the cohort because they're not teachers. They got into it because they are researching an area. So you'd have to change that one. And b, the centrality of language to all learning would have to become accepted by all. So I would mandate the discourse analysis as something that everyone has to be able to do. Because discourse is at the core of all communication and if um, both students and instructors understood that we would have a better outcome.
R Explain to me how that would work.
B Well, from the instructor point of view you have to understand the role of language in what it is you're getting across. So a lot of people have a very basic understanding of language as nothing more than content transmission but there's more going on with that at any one time. We're structuring a power relation between us, for example whenever we speak. The capacity for someone entering a discipline, say an undergraduate student enters a discipline, they are apprenticed into the discourse of the discipline, so if you are the instructor you should be the one who is apprenticing them into it. You shouldn't expect them to just get it by osmosis. So both the students and the instructors would have to understand the nature of the discourse and that becomes central to the learning process. So it's not just, I don't have to just throw all this content at the wall and hope that it sticks or it doesn't. I have to actually be aware of the way language works, the way language functions, language as a function.
R That's very interesting actually. I think we will make you emperor. OK so we're just moving on to the last bit and I'm still recording, hallelujah and this is about your personal experience, so any anecdotes, any stories, and I'll sort of guide them, but anything you want to tell me. All of the students in my study, every single one of them, recounts stories of cheating, plagiarism, of others doing papers for them, or for people they know. My boy who came with a 5 and who's gone downhill since he's done his degree, he has what he calls his ABCs ..Australian Born Chinese ... who rewrite all his papers. You know, what's your experience of that. Have you got any stories of that aspect of Chinese students education here.
B Um, well we saw a flyer on the wall in the corridor out there advertising that service. Laughs...so one of us decided, my colleague down the hall decided to pretend he was a Chinese student and write off to them, and we were shocked ...I don't know if that's the right word because we weren't really shocked ...but intrigued by the elaborate nature of the business going on. Laughs....a reply comes back, you know, but well, here's the fee and they will completely write all assignments. There's no assignment they won't do for you, as long as you are prepared to pay the fee.
R What is the fee?
B I forget now. I sort of forget. I seem to remember it being reasonably expensive, but whether they barter or what not, I don't know. But I think maybe a few hundred dollars for an assignment.
R And is that a local service, or international?
B Within Australia, if I remember rightly, but it may not have been someone within Brisbane. But basically what they say is send us the questions, send us the reading list, and it doesn't matter what discipline, we will give you an assignment. And they even say if you are

not happy or if you get a fail or a D, you get money back or whatever. So it's kind of a pretty fail safe service.
R Yeah, so would something like Turnitin not pick it up?
B Well we do a system called Safe Assign so we're running things through that, and that does pick up a percentage, but how do you know what's not being...it's like drugs, trying to police drugs, you make a drug bust, but how do you know if you are getting 10% of all drugs coming into Australia or 50%. I suspect we're getting 10%.
R And that's pretty blatant isn't it, when it's stuck up on a wall in your language centre.
B Yeah. Yep.
R Alright. Yeah, I told you about my student who came with an IELTS 5.5 and ended up with a masters degree from the University of New south Wales, and then test in a general IEWLTS at 5.5 when she did her immigration test. Have you experienced anything like that?
B Yes, and not only in Australia. You immediately remind me of an experience i had in Japan actually when a Japanese..I was working in a university in Japan, and lthe university wanted one of their admin staff to get a masters, I think it was in linguistics through a uni in Great Britain, so they paid for her to go to England for a year or two and she studied there but she didn't get passed on the thesis aspect straight away so I was asked to work with this girl. She was working at the uni, they said, we need her to get through because we've paid all this money, we've invested all this money in her. So I had a look at the thesis and it was abominably bad, I mean it wasn't a thesis, it was shocking. In terms of everything, the content, the expression, the research methodology was terrible, you know she was meant to have interviewed thirty people and she only spoke to two, that kind of thing. So there virtually wasn't one redeeming feature about it, but there was a timeline in place in terms of her re-submission, so I worked with her and we got a second version submitted, which I thought was absolute garbage and ... clicks fingers...pass! So, that made me think. It's not just Australia. It's probably most Western countries will probably make a token effort. So if we think the masters level, we'll make a token effort to say ah I don't know if we can pass this. Then you go away and do something, and you pass.
R Yeah, it's like a roadworthy test. Take it back to a mechanic three times and eventually it will get through. This is a question maybe I should say, do you have any frustrations, rather than what are your frustrations, in dealing with Chinese students. Do you have any? When you deal with them?
B Well, it's one of those glass half full, glass half empty. But I wouldn't have a job if it wasn't for the problem. That's the irony.
R Yeah, but I suppose I'm talking about the ...like is there anything they do as a group, do you think, oh god, if only they would do this you could be so much better. I mean, have you?
B I think for me, to be honest, um, I'm enculturated into this whole world and because I did live and work in Asia for a long time I've fully evolved a view that you don't blame the student. So if we've let students in, we can't blame the students if they are behaving in certain ways. I mean you can't say to a student who's been allowed into a degree, oh your language is shit, for example. I mean it's more, kind of for me, it's okay those students are there, I am going to work with them.
R OK so not really looking at their language failings or whatever, but looking at their behaviours. Maybe non-attendance, maybe the whole question of cheating and plagiarism, and whatever those issues.
B*** Yeah well, attendance is the biggest issue we have, like why can't you turn up. You know, that's frustrating. And I do think back to when I was an undergrad, and I ....and you were studying things because you really wanted to, so it's frustrating any time I'm dealing with students who are not really interested in what they are here to do.
R Yeah, that motivation question comes through loud and clear in the work that I've done so far with them, because what I hear so often from Chinese students is that they're here because the parents' need for them to have a western degree. Do you have that experience? Is that part of their de-motivation? That they are not really passionate about what they are doing?

B I have heard that as well
R From students?
B From students, and from generally from around the scene so I think that's one source of demotivation, and I think students in general, not just Chinese students, are a lot more just taking a studying things at university for vocational reasons, not intrinsic interest in the subjects, so that's you know, all they want to do is get through and go and work as an accountant or whatever, so you are not only going to get people in class passionately, discussing the stuff.
R So they'll do the minimum? Accounting, yeah, odd that isn't it?
They'll do the minimum just to get through?
B Yeah, people are trying to do the minimum just to get through, to get on to the next stage of life, as opposed to the ideal student who is there...
R Does Sanskrit because they like it?
B Yeah, I mean obviously I never would have missed one of those Sanskrit classes because I wasn't doing it for a joke, I was doing it because I thought, Wow this is going to be fascinating.
R Yeah, exactly.
B Yeah, so that is a huge frustration.
R I'm always surprised though by Chinese students who go through the education system, where they don't miss classes, they're told to come to afterschool study, they're lined up and they're taught, and they come here and they just ... whoa, the freedom of being here seems to influence them.
B Well I don't pretend to understand China at all. I don't speak Chinese, and I've never lived there or anything like that, but the number of interesting contradiction is ... an interesting one for me is that they've emerged from fifty years of socialism/communism and they seem to be the most rabid capitalists....I nearly said Catholics there .... the most rabid capitalists I know. I mean my first job in this area was actually at Macquarie University where I did some of this academic language and learning stuff within their master of commerce and accounting and 90% of the people in the room were Chinese so I got to know them a bit and all they were interested in was how they were going to make money. So that was an eye opener for me because I thought where's all this upbringing about money's not everything, and we're going to be sharing across the board, and you know so I was incredibly amazed. So those kind of contradictions in the Chinese
R Yeah, that contradiction too where they are still part of a society where they want to help each other – I'll give you my paper because this is how we help each other – but this direction, this push towards becoming wealthy, and that's very much a part of the capitalist model that has just emerged.
B Mmmm
R OK... one of the other things, just finishing off, the notion of students deferring exams, do you encounter that a lot? The notion of students getting medical certificates
B Yeah, we are always having to deal with it but u, we've been fairly strict and I wouldn't say it's a huge problem in our particular program. There's always a percentage every semester
R What percentage, would you say
B Well it's more the assessment items leading up to the exam. The vast majority do turn up to the exam. They have to, they seem to know that there's no way out of it, so yeah, I would probably say 5% or so.
R Do they come to you for help?
B Not a hellavu lot. We have a consultation time available but it's not used as much as one might have thought.
R Those who do come, do they expect you to do it for them?
B They tend to come to us more just about the logistics. Like, how do I submit this, or why do I have to do this. Because we do have the English help service I mentioned before. They would go there more for 'help me with my assignment' sort of thing.

R Final question: Do you feel adequately supported by your university in terms of the work that you do. In terms of the resources you have to deliver in which is obviously a huge program.
B Mmmmm
R Bearing in mind that this is an anonymous, confidential interview
B Um, I feel reasonably well resourced. I think the main problem is more that the true understanding of the situation is not there because, um, well for one thing only language specialists only really understand the nature of the language problem. You sort of feel you are talking Martian sometimes to try to explain the nature of the situation, you know, to someone who's not from that background. So for example, they might put a hellavu lot of money into these courses, but then under the impression there's absolutely nothing to creating these courses, making them up or you could switch to the other one, but for example, I've been running the health one. To run the health one I've had to get my head around the health discipline. It just takes a huge amount of time and I don't think people understand what's involved. So the complexity of it is like an iceberg, and only we who are involved in it see the iceberg. So that's frustrating. But I'm realistic to know you know, that the senior management got lots of things on, so how are they going to see the iceberg. You know what I mean?
R Mmmm. OK. Well that was my last question. Is there anything else you'd like to add about your experience of Chinese students, or the work that you're doing?
B Ummm, we've probably covered most of the, most of the issues. I think just, you know the main message is that, is that there will be no simple solution, you know, because language is a lot more complex than people, and the thought process behind language are a lot more complex than people ever really understand. So, you know, it's important people don't think that there's a magic bullet. I guess, that would be my message.
R OK, yeah. That's it. Thank was great, thank you very much.
B Thank you.

Interview with Heather

R Thank you very much for speaking with me today, and I've given you the consent form and the information about my project

H Yes, yes.

R And I've assured you your contributions will have a degree of anonymity – as much as you want – and I am quite happy for you to review the chapter when I have finished, if you would like to ask me for that.

R You're involved in an ALTC project, *Building a Strategic Approach to Uni Students' English Language Assessment and Development*.

H Mm, mm

R What's the nature of that project?

H Well, it's a project that will involve a questionnaire that will go out to all um universities in Australia and it will go to people who are heads of units like this one – an AALL unit. It will go out to PVCs or DVCs Education or international, so um it may well be the case that those people will simply flip it down, but we do want to get close to the strategies that universities are trying to develop so that's why we are targeting people like that, but also the people who are the heads of the units and they are very diverse and have grown within faculties or have grown out of centres that provide pre-language support so there's a lot of diversity across the sector so hopefully, through the directory, the AALL directory, we will be able to find all of those people and get responses from them. The questionnaire is pretty well finished and ready to go out. It's.....there's still some tweaking to do – it's online – and I hope at the end of this month to talk a little bit more about it, maybe get some feedback, um. One of the issues around the questionnaire was, as I said, it is asking about post entry language assessment, and in many universities that only happens at a faculty level, but the focus is really on the university wide … so if you do choose a faculty level there's not much detail then that you can put in the questionnaire and I for one thought though it needed to change, but I am not sure what the other people in the project will think. So if you do say it's university wide then you get a whole lot of questions about the background to it, what kind of test it is, um, evaluation, all of those sorts of things. Not so much at the faculty level.

R Why was this project seen as necessary?

H I think it was to create an online, I suppose, resource for people in universities concerned about this issue to look at see what's happening across the sector and what approaches and strategies people are developing. I suppose of course within the AALL sector we all do very similar things so it was also trying to target any new approaches that maybe were happening within the sector that we didn't know about. And then this online survey will be complemented by case studies within the key universities that project people are based in, and also if necessary those people in their own state because we have reps from Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, New South Wales. But if we think we need more in the case study we will interview key people in some of the other universities who we know already are developing university wide language strategy.

R Can you tell me what approach your institution is taking to language development with international students?

H Well, currently the approach hasn't really changed that much in...It may well change in the future…because there was a review commissioned. Now it's quite...a couple of years old now. As part of .....the new vice chancellor came in and created a new white paper and there were a lot of new initiatives and a lot of discussion around that and then this review happened of English, not just English language support, but all the support for international students, and out of that there was also a focus on English language and some recommendations around that. Now the person who did the review although very eminent and of course talked to me came up with the idea that there should be English for academic purposes be created... that was his conclusion.

R And a good one?
H Um, I suppose I have a mixed opinion about that really.
R Because?
H Well does it transfer to what the students are studying? Number One. And number two, the students themselves may not be that motivated to do another EAP course, so obviously they have done that, that is behind them, they want to get into their subject areas.
R Yeah, ok.
H So from those perspectives I find, and it is perhaps not necessarily the right way to go. (hesitant and pausing throughout answer).
R OK so we'll talk in a moment about what you think are the right ways to go.
H Both laugh. Well as if there is one answer to that.
R Well yes, that's the problem isn't it? Well, not the problem but as you said,
H So this report also said there should be a committee set up who would look at all of these recommendations, and that committee has happened, I am on that committee. And out of that committee there was a suggestion and I made this last year and it's only been acted on, that we set up a working party for English language. Now I've been at this university for a long time and there have been many of these. So when this was again put forward I raised my doubts that it would go anywhere. Because we have gone through this and have made our recommendations again and again, and nothing has happened. And you come up against resourcing. That's what you come up against all the time. And currently as you probably know from the press, (laughs) resourcing is a big issue at this university. So I expressed my opinion at the committee and was reassured by the DVC Education that there was resourcing. Now I take that with a pinch of salt. All this shouldn't have been on your recording …but I have been here long enough.
R yes, and you see that it goes around and around and nothing gets resolved. And as we said we'll come back and talk about things that could be done and what have you in another section rather than explore it now. Because I would like you to ask you if you could describe your job and the work you are doing, particularly as it relates to international students. Now I'm looking particularly at Chinese students, so if you can keep those Chinese students the forefront when I talk about international students. So what do you do? And what is the work that you lead in terms of your international students?
H Well I think it's a pretty typical program that we run. There's a central program of generic workshops that groups throughout the year and the mid-year year break so it basically runs through the year .

R Any what sort of workshops?
H They target many of them are focussing on academic literacy in all shapes and sizes… essay writing, analytical writing, developing an argument, critical writing, that sort of thing. The generic workshops have to be fairly short to fit in with what students are doing in their subject areas. We do however run grammar workshops that go over five weeks, and essay writing workshops that go over four weeks. We also target oral skills which I feel is a rather neglected area and in that area we do divide our programs so it's non-English speaking background students, English speaking background students, but also students who are fluent in English. They could well be from a non-English speaking background, but their English isn't fluent enough. We do pronunciation courses, that's a new thing that we started last year, because we found there was a real need for it. And of course that is all international and NESB international students. We do study skills like managing time, procrastination, that type of thing. And we do reading strategies. And again most of the reading ones are for the, they're divided up, we don't do many for English speaking background, if they needed it they would come to see us. So there's reading strategies, introduction to critical reading, there's quite a few in that grouping as well.
R And they're all voluntary? Nothing compulsory there?
H No.
R Well attended?

H In the first part of each semester they are very well attended. There are huge waiting lists. Now, this is the second part of semester, and we still offer them but …
R They fall off?
H Yeah
R Should they be compulsory?
H I think that would make it very difficult
R For?
H Well, students have to fit in with their timetables.
R Right, ok
H So that's and that's only one part of our program. The other part is the embedded... academic literacy and that consists of either an assessment when they come in, and that is the MASUS procedure (Measuring Academic Skills of University Students) which was developed here. So that is embedded into their unit of study, so they do, in the first two weeks, there's some readings. And then there's a task set on those readings, and usually the task is one in which they have to take a position, and so they're either given the readings in advance and they come in to write under timed conditions, or if the readings are very brief, they might have the readings and they might have to read them and then write them, for example, in engineering this year we did um, I think it was two newspaper articles on wind turbines or something like and then they had to say, that was a little bit different , what are the issues and what are the solutions. So and then they get assessed in four areas; one is the use of the readings, two is the structure of their answer three is paragraph level type of stuff, and four is grammar.
R OK, and all international students, or all students have to do that?
H Well that varies. In Pharmacy, it's all international students, and it is students, local students, who did not do Advanced English at HSC.
R So it's at faculty level the decision is taken?
H Yes. And in Engineering it's, um the advanced students don't usually do it. In some years they do do it. So it's all students, whether you're international or local.
R OK, so assuming a student fails that test…
H And they do…
R What happens then?
H Well Then there are a number of things that have happened over the years. And again it's up to the faculty, and again we work very closely with them and we negotiate and we make recommendations. This time with Engineering, the students that have been identified are invited to come to basically weekly, extra weekly sessions and those are voluntary,
R OK
H Yes I know, but we try to….And then these sessions target the assessments, so there is a kind of incentive for them to come along because they get extra help in their preparation for their next assessment. But, yes, as we repeatedly say, it doesn't work so well. In the past what we had was a part of their tutorial was given over so that these students who were called the communication cohort could get extra help on a weekly basis as part of their tutorial. So...but then there are issues around equity, I don't have a problem with that; I see this as supporting equity basically, and them being sort of identified and taken away, that sort of thing.
R Laughing….Better to have them fail than have them identified?
H Yes (with irony). Anyway, we have, I mean we have tried to look into progression but I just don't have the resources for that. I did ask Engineering. I ..we sent them all from the last 2011 and 2010, we sent them the students that we'd identified and said, 'would you PLEASE follow this up' to what's happening in terms of their performance but nothing's happened.
R Nothing?
H Nothing. So I can't do that. I don't have the resources.
R That must be very frustrating?
H it is. And the other thing is we did look very briefly at what happened last year because this is when our much preferred way of intervention stopped and it seemed to be the

case that those students did succeed. However, the last, I suppose the last critical assignment apart from their exam is a group written assignment, now in that sort of assignment, those students who are struggling are going to hide…..it's obvious. So.....

R So they'll be carried along in the flow … so the assessment is going to save them?

H Yes, I suppose to some extent I am a bit worried about that cohort, they're first years, but then they do have three years and maybe four in which there is time, hopefully, to develop their language. If the subject specialists are continually giving writing assessments or presentation assessments and trying to get across the importance. Now typically in an Engineering faculty that doesn't happen.

R No, no. And that assumes too that a lot of the academics who have the content knowledge actually have the pedagogic skills. And that's another question.

H Yes, and we do have an ALTC grant, another one, which with the UNSW is looking at writing in the undergraduate years in Engineering, is looking at developing online resources. We have already done that, we've done some very good work at the thesis level, which is when that's the very important, that's when writing does become important. So there is concern, but it's very patchy. And to get the academics on board is very difficult.

R Yeah. Just coming back to language, and students coming here. IELTS 6.5 the entry level for your university? Or is it changed, is that the minimum level? I know it changes.

H Yeah, it changes by faculty. That would be very minimal now. I think I was talking to Business last week and they have changed to 7.

R That's interesting. Well, what do you think, using an IELTS scale, what sort of minimum language level do you think international students should have, so they can engage effectively in Australian education.

H Well definitely 7. Definitely.

R OK. Are there still parts of your university where 6.5 is ..

H I don't know, No, Not sure

R OK well I can check that. But definitely 7?

H Oh for sure. And, you know, I think in Law actually they do require even more, higher, and I think that's good.

R Do you think the current language levels of international students are high enough when they get here?

H No. Not all of them. I mean, some of them are, some of them definitely are ready. But many of them aren't. For a number of reasons. I mean, the IELTS may be out of date, they may not have spoken English very much in the previous year. They may of course be coming through a sort of pathway program.

R Yes, that's my next question. Some students come with an IELTS 5, or a 5.5 and they use language pathways as a pathway to tertiary study. Or they do a year 12 here, and get in. What's your view of that?

H Ummm….

R You've experienced it?

H It's very hard to know really. Pauses…. The pathway programs. I mean to some extent maybe the teaching and the content is very good, but at the end of the day, the expectation those students have is that they have paid (hits table for emphasis). They've paid for that pathway that means they'll get in. So, in that sort of context I think it's very difficult to say, do your pathway students, are they ready?

R So should there be another IELTS test at the end of the pathway program? Because we are looking …you've got an IELTS 5 or a 5.5, even if an IELTS 5 does six months of language, it's unlikely that he or she will get a 7 at the end of six months. But they do say, they argue, the students and the centres, oh we do test along the way. But is that enough? Or should it be? Are they measuring apples and oranges?

H It's very hard to know I think.

R So it's not clear?

H It's not clear. For some students it probably is enough, maybe. For others it may not be. I mean, often what happens in the language schools is that the only English is really within

the teaching day. And outside of the teaching day there is hardly any English spoken, any interaction. And I think then students are not really ready. Maybe they're ready, maybe if they did do an IELTS test at the end, because they have been taught to the test, they will get whatever is required. But that does not does not relate, does not carry over to the actual experience of what they will have to do when they are with a subject area of study.

R So would you personally change that, what would you do about that?

H I think that….it's very hard. You know, you're not going to be able to change that, I think. I mean, it's up to the university really, and of course the university, I think that it is good that they say 7, but then there are many ways around that seven, and the pathways are one of the ways around the 7, and I suppose this is why universities are coming to look at post entry language assessment.

R But what's the point of post entry language assessment though once students are in and they, ah, there's no compulsion for them to do anything about their language. Except pass.

H. Mmm, hmmm. Yes, I agree. It's ….um....

R So does the post entry language testing just measure the extent of the problem without actually addressing it?

H To some extent, yes it does. And I think it's kind of early days for us to ….You know. I think there's been a rush towards us having these post-entry language assessments and then, 'what do we do now'. Laughs

R So is it once you see, or once universities …obviously not all practitioners but once universities see the extent of the problem, is that when some of your strategies are going to be accepted and developed and implemented.

H Well that's what one would hope. And that in terms of curriculum renewal in foundation programs that there would be then room to, um, I guess address this issue and it's not clear though how do you address it, because a foundation program of course is for all students in that particular subject area but if you have students who are well able to write, whereas you have students who need a lot more support, so how to do you tackle that that doesn't bore these students to tears, and yet you know, supports these students, but in a way that is compulsory let's say, and I can't find a better way of putting it. You know, it's no longer voluntary that they turn up at the extra support tutorials or whatever it is.

R Yeah, because it seems to me from the work that I have done so far, that the students who need the help are the ones who don't come. That seems to be with universities, without nominating which they are, but some of them have very good frustrations of the ALL ADVISERS is that students come, don't come. When there are compulsory language courses, they only come for the part where they know they will be assessed. I.e. they turn up at tutorials, but don't come to the lectures.

H That may well be the case. I mean I think it's true here as well. The students are just so overwhelmed trying to get it together for the next assessment. That's their priority really, even though their language is not adequate for that assessment, they're hoping they will scrape through somehow.

R Alright, let's move on now to IELTS, which is the test that is widely used and accepted. IELTS seems to be the main language competence tool. Do you think it's the best way of testing students' language capacity?

H I am not an IELTS person so I guess I can't really comment in great detail on that because I am not that familiar with the test. I mean as language test goes, it's a pre-entry type of language tests, it's okay, I think for post entry what we tried to develop, and I know there are many versions out there, I mean, the problem with our post entry language assessment, was it's embedded in a discipline, it uses discipline content, it's relevant to what the students are studying anyway, it's resource intensive, that's the problem with it. And other post entry language assessments which are on line or more generic, I think are not quite as resource intensive as ours. But I think if you are going to have one it really should be embedded in the unit of study and therefore relevant to what the students are reading, studying. Now of course as a barrier test, English language barrier test, which it is, IELTS, IELTS is probably as good as

any other one. I mean it has to be generic. I mean, they tried to make it language specific, but……
R OK, well let me put it another way. Do you think there's a correlation between an IELTS score and an international student's ability to complete tertiary study?
H Oh there must be some research on this, and I have no idea.
R Just in your opinion…your feelings on it.
H I think from early research that colleagues of mine did, looking at IELTS and looking at our post entry language assessment, we found that there was greater correlation with the post entry language assessment – that's the MASUS – and performance, rather than the IELTS. That was our finding. Now that's going back to the mid-nineties. I don't know if the situation has changed.

R Alright. Let's look at academic environment. Do you find Chinese students in particular have a different approach to study from domestic students? Is that your experience/
H I think again, there's this kind of generalisation about Chinese students' approaches to study and I would not necessarily say that it's that stereotypical approach. I think there is variation, and I think that some of the students probably approach their studies very much like an Australian student would. Pausing So I would think that for example, there's this view that Chinese students are not critical. I think they're very critical. I think they are well able to say if they think someone is teaching them well or not. I suppose it's just probably different ways of being critical.
R Yeah, I've found they're highly critical, but it doesn't necessarily mean they are analytical. I guess that's really the issue I've found.

H well neither are our local students. We have a workshop called Analytical Writing, and the light bulbs go on for all the students in that workshop. We have students coming in here, local students, Australian students, who have feedback on their assignments, 'this is too descriptive, you are not analysing, la de da'. So it's for all students, making that shift from you know, telling the story to really looking at all the information and reshaping it into the themes that they are going to classify it under.
R OK well that's an interesting perspective. That's good. Alright, so let me ask you, what do you see are the major issues for international students?

H Definitely of course written and oral communication, and (pause) also that reading to writing….they're very weak in terms of using their sources to argue a position or even analysing the debate in a particular area.
R OK so it's really that their academic background before they got here doesn't set them up for that?

H I think so, yes, and I don't think, I mean it might be the case with some of the pathway programs, the language centres, but I think it's almost impossible for a pre-entry language course to really prepare students for the kinds of readings that they will be faced with, and therefore the assessment tasks. And of course it's not their role to do that anyway. That is pre-entry, it's not their role.
R I mean, I encountered, I was in Vietnam, pre-university, and we were teaching students for the very first time how to write a critical response, a critical response on one paper and a critical response integrating a number of papers, how to write a research essay and the notion of researching and using their readings to inform their essays, so I guess we had some very good success because that was a very specific pre-university course. I mean is it so that universities may have to offer those sorts of courses – credit courses – which you would expect students would have before a student gets to university, but if they are coming without these skills is it enough to say, yes, you can do this voluntarily, or does it have to be a credit subject embedded in their programs?

H I mean I think in a foundation type program you can scaffold those kind of assessments in whatever the subject is, and you can certainly do it for both international and local students, and I mean all those sorts of, in terms of critical alignment, all of those would fit in I am sure for many foundation programs for both local and international, so to some extent I don't see the need to have it for just international.

R Ok, let me put it another way. If you've got students who are struggling, then their post entry testing is not satisfactory, is there a case to be mounted to extend the length of their degrees, so instead of having them finish a BA in three years, set them a BA over four years and make sure there's content in there that gives them depth, both in terms of language and their capacity. I mean, is that an option?

H I mean, it may well be a very good option but I think to make that compulsory would be quite difficult. And I am not really sure how it would work, really. I don't know.

R OK. Well let's have a look at this 'perfect world' question….both laugh. In a perfect world, you're VC, you've got unlimited funds, you can do whatever you want to do. Would you restructure international education to get a better outcome for all students? What would you do? Clearly there are a whole heap of issues. What are the sort of conversations you have with colleagues? You know, 'if I were VC I would……..'

H Laughs. Pauses. Well I think … there's probably no way around saying that there has to be a certainly level of English language proficiency on entry. And okay we might say it has to be 7, OK that's it. And then curriculum renewal would be great, and funding to do that.

R Explain what you mean by curriculum renewal.

H Well looking at the foundation core units in first year in the BA, in the BSc, in the Bachelor of Commerce, looking at those core first year pre-requisite units of study that students have to do, and embedding into those the appropriate scaffolding in terms of reading for example, and writing, and different assignment topics, analysing assignment questions, all of those different things that we do. And also oral communication as well. So I think that's a place to start. Horizontal integration. But also you don't stop there. So you carry on and you build up the skills as the knowledge base grows, as the complexity grows, and of course if students are going to do Honours, again that's almost initiation into becoming a researcher, so you need to run programs to support the students at that stage as well. So you have got horizontal and vertical embedding. I think alongside that you would have to, especially in the foundation years, you may have to address the issue of students who have not, students who despite everything, are not well prepared. And you would have to probably do that in a way that um,(pausing), it would have to be compulsory and it may well have to be extra. There are difficulties there of course.

R Of course, but we are talking perfect world where there are no difficulties.

H And I think, OK currently we do have a large number of students coming from China, who really live in ghettoes and who interact with each other in Chinese, no matter how much you try to do something about that. So in those units of study where there are large numbers of Chinese students you would, it's that's a really difficult issue. I don't know how you find your way around that. However, I would….(pause), I would probably try to make some things compulsory in that those students would have to, I don't know, enrol in some kind of outside activity involving them in conversation with native speakers and of course we would probably have to pay those or give them some incentive. Students come along here for conversation classes. It is not my role, or the role of the learning centre, to provide conversation classes. No way. So the conversation should happen spontaneously with a native speaker, there should be some way of bringing those people together, rewarding the native speakers, so you have got internationalisation happening.

R Yeah, instead of ghettoisation. So is that a sort of a mentoring program you're talking about?

H Yes, definitely, but a mentoring program rather different from the ones that are happening at the moment. But I think....

R So a social mentoring program, in effect.

H Yes, yes..

R So, would you say international students' lack of cultural understanding is a major impediment? They come here, they're used to typically classes in high school of 50 students, where maybe the top ten and maybe the bottom ten get attention and the rest just stumble around in the middle. There's no questioning, this is a very typical type of Chinese education. So when they come here they are also ….homework, homework, homework. Study study, study. They come here and you know, it's much more self-directed and what have you. Is that an issue do you think? Do they adapt too well to that notion of freedom?

H: Um, it's hard. I can't really comment on that very well, I don't think. I think they, I am sure there is some kind of transition coming from that kind of situation, and of course if they do do a language course here or even in China, there's the chance there to settle in, and to get to know what's the cultural differences. And those kind of preparation courses are good in signalling to students what those cultural differences are, and I think that's good, and I think, that's one of the plusses of pre-entry language courses.

R So would it be possible then to have a pre-entry language program running in the universities for students who arrive here, so they have to do a pre-university program where those issues are spelled out to them. Issues about the notion of self-directed learning, their responsibility to participate, encouraging that social mentoring etc. Is there a role for that sort of program?

H I think that, I mean I think it does happen in those pre-language type situations.

R I'm talking about once they've come to university. I'm talking about once they come in, they've done a language course, and then they get here at university. Do they go straight in to their undergraduate degrees, or to they actually have, would it help to have a foundation subject, a compulsory credit foundation subject, it's not just about language, it's about cultural expectations, it's about, I suppose, setting them up for living, working, studying in Australia. Do we do enough for the students when they turn up?

H Yeah, I mean I suppose it depends. You see here at this university, there already is, there are already are sort of pre entry type foundation programs that are pretty closely aligned to the university, so those kinds of things do happen within those programs. Or the students come on to the campus, and one of my colleagues actually gives them a lecture – I don't know if that is enough. But my sense is that if they are already in Australia, to some extent some of that is happening already. Um, I think again the place where that needs to happen probably is in your first lectures in whatever core unit of study.

R But then again, you might have 50% of local students rolling their eyes and saying, 'hang on, we've come through high school. This isn't high school.'

H Yeah, but those students also face the shock. Their hands are not being held when they come here. I've had a few coming in this week, who, they've bombed out, because they haven't managed their time, they've procrastinated, because there hasn't been someone at the back of them, like there is at school. So I think, I mean some of the students of course will roll their eyes anyway. But for many students this is very much a new culture for them.

R Mmm OK, that's a very interesting point because we tend to think of it only for international students.

H No, not at all. I mean one of the things we do in the workshops, these are postgrad workshops, it's always very interesting, so they do a little survey when they come into the class – this is I think preparing for postgraduate study and research. So what are their expectations, so they give kind of questions. Is your supervisor going to correct your thesis, that kind of thing. So they look at each others, and they talk about it, and there could someone from Argentina talking to a Chinese student, not necessarily all Chinese. And then we have a discussion about it, and through that process we try to raise their awareness that this is not going to happen. You expect it to happen, but sorry. So I think those kind of activities are really useful.

R Just finally, while we are talking about academic environment, when I went to uni, when I did my undergraduate degree, there were very few faces that didn't look like mine in the classroom. And now of course it's totally different. There might be 50% of international students in some class

H And then some
R So what are the issues for domestic students in institutions that have large cohorts of international education? And I've heard students, or academics say 'I can't talk to students the way I used to because they won't understand what I am talking about. I can't make jokes any more'. 'I have to be very precise with language. A lot of the spontaneity has gone out of my work. Does that, do you hear that sort of thing from domestic students. Has international education impacted on the experience of domestic students/

H Yes, definitely. I think it does for sure, yeah. And also because the trend is more towards working together, working in groups, presenting assignments in groups, so there has to be, and I think sometimes it's fine for both domestic and international students, but sometimes it's not. And group work is always going to be a challenge anyway.
R Do domestic students tend to pick the international students as part of the group or do they stay pretty much within their own Australian cultural cohort.
H I think the trend is trying to stay in their own cohort. That's what I have observed anyway.
R Is there a role there for tutors to mix them up, compulsorily.
H There could be, yes, um, I am not sure if again it's probably been tried.
R Alright, I want to move on now to your personal experience. Just talking about what you've found, what you've seen, what have you. All of the students in my study recount stories of cheating, plagiarism, people doing papers for them, some of them as I said are quite open about saying, 'I've had to help so and so because he was going to fail so I did his paper for him'. Or, 'I got a medical certificate because my exams were on consecutive days and I needed time to study'. Has that been your experience? What has been your experience in terms of students, ah, cheating, plagiarism. One of your colleagues let me tell you said he walked into his office one day and on the board outside was a poster saying, 'need an assignment done? Pass, credit guaranteed' etc.

H I think there is help of that kind. I am sure it happens here. Definitely. Um, and students are really quick to find their way around things like Turnitin, for example, so one of the outcomes of that which I think is really sad is that you have this shift towards just exam type assessment, away from essays or assignment type assessment.
R So have you seen the assessment change as a consequence, are you saying?

H Ah, I think it has, yes, I think to some extent anyway. Um, and, that is, that's yep, that's difficult I think. I mean even if academics want to improve students' writing, and I guess the other thing is ok, they do set assignments but they don't give many marks to them, so the message to students is that this is not valued. So if you do cheat, it doesn't matter, sort of thing. So I mean that's another side issue, I think.
R Yeah, but you can't stop them cheating in exams either. They borrow each other's ID cards. You're nodding, so obviously you've come across that.

H Well, I've heard that. I haven't come across it, but I've heard that.
R I have one student in my study who came with an IELTS 5.5. She did, she was at Macquarie University. She did a language course as entry, she did a bachelor of finance, she did a diploma of hospitality, so she was working at various hotels around Sydney for a year, that was her placement, she did a Masters in Finance at the University of New South Wales, and then when she applied for her permanent residence, she tested again and got an IELTS 5.5. So she was exactly the same as when she came here five years ago. It's hard to know whether that's a ...whether the test was unreliable, or whether she's just come through…
H Yes, it sounds strange
R Have you had any experience like that – students ending up with language levels the same as when they got in?

H Well anecdotally, the engineers for example say that students' language is worse when towards the end of their degree than in the beginning.
R Who says that? The teachers or the students?
H The academics, yeah.
R Why would that be?
H I don't know. I find that uh….
R As an ALL adviser, is that something that you would see?
H The only thing that I think, the only reason that I see can be the case is that basically the students go back to a Chinese speaking environment, they spend their social part of their life in a Chinese speaking environment, and now what I find strange about this person is that they were in hospitality, so surely they must have been interacting in English, they would have had to have been, so they... I find it extraordinary that it's 5.5.
R Yeah, and I know this girl and I know what her language was like when she came here and I know what it was like when she finished, and I'd say it's a reliability issue with the test, but unfortunately that reliability, that one IELTS test was enough to send her home without permanent residence, after she'd spent what? $120 thousand on an education
H Exactly
R $120 thousand dollars on an education and is scathing about it. The one IELTS test can bring undone all of her hard work.
H Was it the spoken language? What was it?
R Ah, the speaking test. When she got 5.5. And interestingly, she had a 6 when she came here for speaking. Her oral was 6. An unreliable test perhaps.
H Yes.
R You deal with a lot of Chinese students?
H Uh huh.
R What are your main frustrations in dealing with them?
H Um, I suppose …long pause…it's hard to say really. In general, in general it probably comes down to this unpreparedness. That they have come into the university and they really needed longer in terms of their language. So that's where the frustration is. Because once they get into the university and they're into their units of study, there isn't the time. So there is that issue that they haven't either done enough language preparation or, ok they have done the language preparation but they haven't lived enough in an Australian speaking, English speaking environment, so they are not ready. And I guess my concern especially with the Knight review, my personal take on that is that the universities and Knight himself, they are just leaving it up to the employer. And you've seen the result. So the person comes in, can't speak English, OL….sorry, mmm. Or their English is, I mean it relies very much on the spoken language in every situation. No matter how much you have been coached, first sentence,
R Yes, indeed.
H So that comes back to pronunciation…the pronunciation, and changing that, is a long term commitment.
R OK. So, do you feel adequately supported by your university, in terms of those long term commitments?
H No. laughs. (emphatically)Of course not. I mean we have continually, the outcomes of all our working parties have been for more resourcing. More resourcing. But it never happens.
R No. Just coming back to the students themselves. When they present to you, what do are they saying to you. Do they …is there a common theme that runs through their pleas for help?
H Of course. They want their grammar corrected. 'Please correct my assignment'. There is an expectation that that is what we do. Proof reading and editing, which of course we don't do. Um…
R So what do you say to them, when they say, 'proof read my assignment?'
H Well, we say, 'sorry we don't do that. We can look at the first page with you and we'll identify the typical errors you are making and show you how to correct them, but then the

responsibility is yours. And we also have a policy here, and I know that other universities have different policies. We will see a student **after** their work has been assessed. Not prior to assessment, because we feel that is an equity issue. And the only students we see **prior** to assessment are disabled students and Ausaid students.

R Is there pressure for you to do more for students? Do you find the Chinese students are particularly assertive in terms of wanting you to do more for them? When they are failing?

H Yes, they are.

R How does that play out?

H Well we do what we can but at the end of the day the ability to do one on one help is very limited. Especially we want students to feel that they will become independent not dependent. So we do see students on a one to one basis but we try to limit that.

R So, are they very assertive, in the sense that, 'I've paid for this and therefore I should be passed?'

H No one says that – no.

R That's excellent to hear.

H No, I haven't heard that at all.

R I have as a lecturer. Laughs…oh yes.

H No none of my colleagues either

R OK just one final question.. In terms of international education. I mean obviously it's a funding question. Universities need to get money, the government doesn't give them enough. We've talked a lot about the cons of international education, but there are pros as well. So, just to finish off, what would you see as the main pros and cons of international education?

H Well I think there has been more raised awareness of internationalising the curriculum, but I think that's not for me to say that's more out there in the subject areas, but I think that has been raised as an issue. I think certain units of study have taken that on board.

R So that's a benefit for domestic students?

H That's a definite benefit.

R For domestic students as well?

H Yes yes. And asking those international students, inviting them to give their perspectives as the curriculum plays out, I think that's a plus for all students, and not just the local ones but also the international ones because they then obviously have to reflect on their own experience in comparison with domestic students, because it's a sharing cultural, educational sharing experience. So I think those are real plusses, yes. And I think there is definitely more motivation and interest on the part of local students in the outside, in the global side of things because they know we are in the global market now, and my job may take me to x or y. And therefore I need to have this wider perspective.

R And international education has contributed to that?

H Definitely. Yes.

R Is there anything else that you'd like to add that we haven't talked about.

H Mmmm, I think we have covered so many things.

R Mmm, we have, haven't we?

H Yes we have. I can't think of anything.

R Alright, just as this point I'll make sure it's still recording, which it is. Yes. It is.

Interview with Tanya, Sept 2012

R Alright and we are recording now, and we only have a limited time so I will move quite quickly through our questions. First of all ....and as you know from the consent form, your interview will form part of chapter from the language specialist point of view. You won't be identified by name or by institution in the chapter....which I guess is a way of asking you to be as free and open as you would like to be.

Can you describe your job or the work you are doing as it relates to international students from China?

T OK so I'm an assistant director. We have three units here in Study and Learning, we have Disability, we have two academic supports, so central and discipline. The work that we do is academic support of students, and certainly at the moment with the interest in (pause) English language and teqsa threshold standards and the work that's being done with the graduate attributes, we're rewriting the graduate attributes and incorporating threshold standards, there's a lot of focus on international students and incorporated in that you know, the focus on students from China.

R OK. What sort of strategy does your university run for language students, or international students to help them with language issues?

T We are, have been in the last two years (now I've been here for a year), before myself there was a review and this year (2012) we've worked, um, we've started to implement quite a number of initiatives to address English language, academic skills issues. We have set up now an institutional wide PELA. It's not mandatory, it's opt-in, and that's for onshore and offshore students. And we do have off-campus students based in China as well, and they can do this indicator tool. We don't call it diagnostic, we don't call it a test, it is an indicator of their English language proficiency or English language, post entry English language. And it provides a score based on three bands. The students, we're now working with students, we are now working on providing students with opportunities to work with academic support staff in a closer way than they have before to ensure that they are guided and facilitated through a number of different if you want to call them interventions or learning opportunities. So we've got a whole range of practical sort of response to um, developmental opportunities, so there's workshops. The learning lab has a whole range of resources on it. It's web based material and there's some, um, moving to blended and online mode of teaching, so that students who are offshore can have more access to native speakers, and supplements what they've got also offshore. We've got a sort of drop in centre where students can work with staff, academic support specialists. We've got lunch-time classes on speaking and listening, we've got PASS where students can work, and they're attended too. I mean we've got a couple of Chinese background, Chinese speakers. And they provide a really good role model, so it's successful. So there's a range of things.

R That's great, yeah; You said that your PELA program is an opt-in program. Is that useful do you think, or do you think it should be mandatory for all students?

T Look, I think it's working here in an opt-in manner. You know....it's um,

R Do you know who's escaping that net though?

T We've just implemented it this semester.

R OK

T And it will be interesting, and I think that's a really valid question and we should be looking at it. Um, and you know there's for's and against's. It's not clear cut is it, PELAS?

R Never

T I think you can't think of what works. You know it gets ... some...while it's there and its outside, it's accessible outside of courses, some lecturers who are concerned about the language/communication skills level of their students, actually have it sitting on their blackboard. So that brings it that one step closer. And that way it's a really good opportunity for students to engage with it more directly by having the imprimatur of the lecturer. And

that's, and that's nice. The student feels quite comfortable. "I can do this, I can do it with my lecturer understanding. You know, it's not remedial, it's not deficit it's just part of my learning.'
R I've heard other people say PELAs are great, as long as universities find the resources to support those students found needing assistance. Is that an issue? Do you anticipate that will be an issue?
T No, I think we're you know, we have gotten we're getting, we've gotten to the point, what's next. So you've identified the student, what next? It would be...um...you know, almost immoral, to say, 'well you're not doing very well. There you go, here's a brochure, go and sort yourself out.' (both laugh) We have resources committed to helping students along their pathway. And what we do is, we track their English language learning – and provide formative, we provide opportunities for students themselves to have formative feedback on their English language as it develops in their time at RMIT. And we have tools such as a learning plan to be developed. It's all new this, this year, this semester (2nd semester, 2012), by the time we've got everybody recruited to work on this project, but it's a pretty exciting time and we've gone past the PELA, you know and the excitement of getting the PELA, and now, does it work? It's one part of a suite of robust interventions, you know we can – a robust pathway.
R Alright, let me ask you a question. You've got a strategy and the PELA is part of it, how long do you think it will take before all of those strategies are integrated into a point where you're comfortable you are doing everything you can do, and the outcomes are there. Have you put any kind of timeline on that?
T We've got um a three year vision; we had this year, 2014 2015, so we've got until 2015, that's our vision. We are working on funding to take us through to that. The University has certainly indicated that we will have more funding next year. We just, it's sort of bumped up against an interesting time for universities, so we'll see what happens there.
R And of course with numbers dropping, are you confident that the University will continue its support for programs, if international student numbers are starting to decline? It's a very heavy resource demand, isn't it?
T It is a heavy resource demand and I'm actually really pleased RMIT has taken up the....it's not phased, the institution. The institution is, is very keen to keep...
R Excellent
T Yeah, yeah it's good.
R OK, just with an eye on the time
T Yeah, I am so sorry Robyn
R Yeah, we're not going to finish in 5. But let me.....
T Let's take it a little bit at a time, to make sure you get what you need.
R Thank you. Well let's skip to the language areas. Looking ...and I have enough thank you about your university. Looking now at how students enter Australian universities, IELTS seems to be the main language competence tool. Do you think it's the best way of teaching (corrects) testing international students' language capacity?
T Laughs. I know, there is.... I mean, IELTS is a test. It's a snapshot. And it does well with what it is. If it is interpreted as that, what it's meant to be, then sure, it's a robust test. Um, pauses. R But..
T Is that all we need? No. I mean, it's a start, and end point, the end of one point and the start of another, and that's what we know is that the nature of language is that it's it's about communication, it's about, you know, a whole set of skills and sub-set of skills, and personal approaches that are involved in language. We know language moves along, it plateaus, it goes backwards, it, you know, it depends on how you administer IELTS, and when you administer IELTS and all that sort of stuff. Um, you know, in a sense we've got to have an indication and I think there, we do look at the IELTS, then we have got our indicator tool. And we don't call it a test, we don't call it a screen, we don't call it a diagnostic. It is an indication because precisely it provides an indication and then we move towards um taking students on, and it's that...I think what we need to think about is um, student responsibility, student self-awareness in their English language skills development, um, and academic.. We're working with academic staff as well to engage them to give students the right feedback.

R Can I just ask you then? You seemed a little hesitant. And understandably, because it is just a snapshot. But do you believe there's a correlation between an IELTS score and an international student's ability to complete tertiary study?
T Mmmm, gosh, I've been an IELTS writer and you know, it's quite a good, a good robust test, but no, you know being a successful university student is more than an IELTS test. It's an English language test, it's not a you know, and that's what it does and that's what it's meant to be, and I think this institution's recognising that you need more.
R What do you mean, more?
T That a student needs you know, more um, it needs support, it needs to have curriculum aligned to providing students with the right sort of skills and understandings and critical thinking, and all of that, and being able to communicate all of that in the discipline in order to become a graduate and successful at that, um. (pause) Yeah
R I'll come back to that
T It's an interesting question ....mmmmm
R Yes, it's an interesting area that whole question of IELTS. It is a snapshot, but sometimes people see it as more. And I'll come back to that whole notion of curriculum in a minute when I'm talking about the discipline academics. But let's stay with the IELTS though, because it is the test that is used. What sort of minimum language level to you think international students should have, so that they can engage effectively in Australian education. I know what the scores are, but what do YOU think is an appropriate score, in an Arts Faculty, for example.
T Look, I couldn't couldn't say, I think it depends which faculty, which course. It's personality driven as well, isn't it? I mean, we've got language students who might not have a 6.5 but have the type of personality who could you know, just, are able to communicate what they need to communication personality, so might be borderline 6 t, 6.5 and they actually do alright, you know. And we have students who might be a 7 and the whole...so if we are going to think about it...but the institution needs an indicator and I think 6.5 is a reasonably good, a reasonably good score to start with. It worries me for example, hat in Victoria, the Victorian Institute of Teaching has now raised their IELTS to an academic 8, 7.5, overall score of 8.
R It's a high bar.
T Aand um, you know, when we are looking at teachers, international teachers coming through who are often picked p by the language teaching sector of schools, that's very high. And that's almost discriminatory; it's almost white Australia happening all over again. And unless you think and um, the deans of education are very concerned about this. You know, it's an academic 8, that's a pretty high score. Do we need that? I don't know. For, you know for teachers to come in and get that score in English, and teach, to be able to teach their languages out there in schools, I don't know. We have indicators, we have snapshots, but then it's up to the expertise of the academics to take that student and take that score and create a good learning experience for the student....you know
R A holistic experience?
T Yes, the whole thing. And it's what we want to churn out at the end, you know.
R Well let me ask you another question along those same lines. Some students come with a 5, or a 5.5 and they go into these pathway programs and they use language programs often at the universities where they go to study, and they might do a 6 or a 10 week course and then they come out with no IELTS test, but the test doesn't compare applies with apples, and they come into university with their 5 or their 5.5. Do you have a view about that? Do you see that is troubling?
T I'd like to investigate that further at this university. I think that is part of our brief to see...um, you know, what.
R I'm not suggesting it happens at this university, I don't know, but I can tell you at Griffith University, at Macquarie University, where my students are, all of my students bar one came through those pathway programs. Pause .... You must know of it happening?
T Yeah, I know, people do report that... I'd be interested, I'd be really interested. And that's what we always ... I think it's our responsibility to maintain an overview of quality, that

quality assurance is really important. Because we're not we're not doing justice to our students if we don't ....but yeah, I do understand that people have reported that students come through the pathways and are not necessarily um, as robust in their language standing, or you know, their proficiency levels as say someone who might just do their courses, then does an IELTS, and then comes in.

R I had a student, one of my students in the case study came with a 5.5, went to Macquarie did a 10 week language course, was never tested from that moment forward, until she did her final migration IELTS test. After she completed an undergrad diploma in hospitality where she was working in hotels, she did an undergraduate degree in finance and did a masters degree in finance at the University of New South Wales and tested on exit at 5.5. Is that common? That students go right through their whole academic careers without improving?

T Well, you'd hope not. You know. And I think that's ...you almost think how can that happen, when you've got three years of an undergraduate course, something around about, and if the curriculum reflects competencies and reflects communication skills and you know aligns in terms of their assessment, that constructive alignment and you know it's a good solid curriculum program, you'd think that somewhere along the line someone has said to this student, look you know, you've got your accounting concepts and all that sort of stuff, you're a great engineer, but you can't put together a report or a presentation on that bridge design that you've done. We've really got to get that sorted. Let's look at something. And that's the responsibility of the academics to say it's not just content that I take care of, I take care of the student. I will now pathway you in or articulate you into or guide you into....but this is where we are going to work with our project, work much more closely with our staff so they can feel like they can enter into that space and say something.

R Well let's talk about the discipline academics, the teachers of accounting, law, etc , and I've done some interviews with them and I've had some very mixed views there A focus group I did was very interesting in terms of teasing out some real issues about what they saw as their responsibility. And there was a very stronger view among some of them I hope that the language issues are not their issues. They're there to teach them how to do a trial balance, or about marine law, but they're not there to guide their language. Is that something that you sense with some of the discipline academics?

T Absolutely, they'll tell you very clearly it's not their brief. They don't know how, they don't feel comfortable, they don't want to compromise, you know, they don't know what sort of feedback. And that's fair enough too. If they don't feel like they've got some, something valid you know, and I think they do, it's just you know, getting them to think about it. This is where we are going to be doing some work with our lecturers to get them to understand what sort of feedback they can provide to the students, you know, at a ...without having to feel like they're going to develop any expertise in this area, but can rely on the expertise of academic specialists at the institution but that they can enter into that first base type discussion with students and provide that front end, and we've got now a policy um, our in assessment policy, and earlier ?? .. So the staff are required to provide feedback on English language to students struggling. (Indistinct comment)

R Well I'm just a bit...perplexed is probably not the right word, but bemused, if you have academics who are saying 'nothing to do with us', and you've got this great strategy. And some of these academics have been academics for a very long time, and they've still got their arms very firmly folded, and their body language is telling you, you have all the strategies you want, but it's nothing to do with us. I mean, how long? This is going to be hugely lengthy process surely. Would you put any timeline on that?

T Very good questions. I think we are going to certainly work with the new incoming sessionals, but as you said, it's changing mindsets, its winning hearts and minds, it's ...and you're absolutely right, it's long term view, it's hard yakka, and it's ...um, you know, and it's also um, it's wonderful when it does happen because it is helpful for everybody who's involved in it, but for that proportion of academics who just don't feel that it's part of their brief, I think you know, we will ...I don't know.

R Alright, so does the university have to make it part of their performance management. I mean is that the only way, manage with the big stick if the carrot doesn't work.
T I don't know, I don't know ...sighs...you would like to think that um, it doesn't come to that. You'd like to think that when when when staff take up academic development they have a level of awareness and consciousness to understand how important the two are, and we will tap into all of that with our own sort of project, but then it becomes an HR issue and policy issue, and some ...I know what you're saying. It's fraught. You don't want to go down that path because sometimes if you go down that path, you've actually got the wrong person to begin with.
R Yes, indeed you have. Alright then, so is it then a question of just giving the skills to the academics. Is it just a huge professional development exercise? Some of it is obviously going to be about mindset but is it they don't have the skills so they're stepping back because they don't have the skills. Is it possible to provide the skills within a, what, 3 year timeframe?
T Look, I think we can provide a certain amount of awareness and understanding and skills and point them in the right direction and to the resources that are available, but I think there has to be a first level and that can't come from the small number of academic support staff that run around universities, that first level of understanding must come in a meaningful way from the students' teachers, tutors, whoever they are. Um, it is ... it's that partnership approach then. Now you know, you've understood, we have a sense that your English language, you have some issues here. There are got some gaps. This is great...now the next step is ...so looking at it in all sorts of ways, it's all developmental. Right, let's work with the academics, there's academic support stuff around, there's a range of different resources around and opportunities for students, rather than ...it works better that way as we know with our own work and discipline, than academic support staff having this constant challenge of 'let me in, let let me in, let me talk to the student and a completely separate, separate discussion and I think that's what I learned through my own PHD is when when the student and the lecturer and the academic support person, it came a trilogic sort of interaction when it was not just a dialogue, you know of two separate members at a time, but the three, that's when' you just see students progress , would lurch towards.....and for academics the pennies will drop. And as an academic development person I would understand the worlds and be able to do more meaningful work. And that was a lovely space. But you're right, that is a challenge, when gone....some universities, you know, teachers, people who are doing the teaching, might be more interested in doing the research.
R Talking about research, this is something really that has come up too from the discipline academics, they say, I teach, I research, I've got consultation hours, I've got more and more and more and more and more, and now you want me to be a language adviser.
T Well that's a copout isn't it? We don't want them to be a language adviser, WE'VE got language advisers
R Yeah, it is a copout.
T Year, it's a copout. We just want them to be able to unpack the element of the feedback that they are giving.
R The other issue I've heard from them too, and I've heard this from my students, is 'I've come to Australia and all I heard about was Australia and the United States'. And it was brought to my attention by one of my students who did get an 8.5, hallelujah, and he did his masters degree, he said 'China will be the world's biggest economy so why aren't we talking about China in the lectures.' And what he is talking about is internationalisation of curriculum. What are your thoughts about that? Is that a battle you find, or that you see as a problem?
T Um, God, where do you start Robyn? Yeah.
R That's the frustration isn't it? Where do you start?
Y Where do you start? Where do you start? One of my roles, my community roles, is I'm a commissioner for the …….. Damn and where do you start? Where do you start with with giving with with just opening the mindsets of people so they embrace intercultural ... you know, they have enough of an intercultural understanding of themselves, their awareness, and literacy. Yeah, we talk about global citizenship. Mmmm

R You get pockets of it, then you get pockets of this resistance.
T Yeah, that just means getting cappuccino and pizza.
Both laugh
T I mean, that's very flippant, but yeah, I do know what you are saying and I, I get what you are saying. I think, you know that's part, that's part of you know we talk about graduate attributes and graduate competencies and academic development needs to move with students. You know, we are asking them to be global citizens. Well then, constructively align that into your curriculum. I under....Like I get that.
R I'm very conscious of your time and I'm just going to have a couple more questions. I could talk to you for a very long time.
T I know.. and your questions are wonderful.
R Very interested what you are telling me. Students' lack of cultural understanding. Do you see that as a major impediment?
T The Chinese students?
R Yeah, in your experience are they passive learners, are they, their whole cultural persona, what they bring from China, their experiences what have you, how does that play out in Australia as an international student, for them.
T I mean, again, you know, it's an interesting question. We can typify and stereotype Chinese students then know full well that there's no, you know, couldn't typify an Australian student. Why should we typify a Chinese student? It's again, it's what we were saying before know are, it's...this will get me on my high horse, you know, as a commissioner and having worked in tertiary education in languages and intercultural awareness .and doing stuff with human rights, I could talk forever about this, but you know it's a constant thing when our lecturers have enough of a confidence in and awareness of their own intercultural understandings and curiosity, that will take a healthy curiosity in all that, you know, um the curriculum will change, and so will the stereotypes, and so will the alienation, and you know this....this silliness about group work.
R What do you mean, 'silliness about group work?'
T Oh you know, do the ....let the Chinese students stay amongst themselves because they'll feel better that way, and we won't get them to integrate ... ..or we MUST and they dic..... You know we see.... Can I tell you, ...in the PASS university .... facilitators, I think they call it, it's a resource manual, it's trained and it says stuff about making , actually putting some one in, mix up your groups, you've got an English language speaker, and a non-English, an international student with English language speakers and create that on purpose so that the student must speak in English, but you sort of get a little bit of what they say, but you can't be that prescriptive. You cannot take away someone's, someone's right and dignity and.....
R Particularly when you're saying you're a young self -managed learner, you're on this path to independence, but you sit with that person.
T Yeah and you create all these non-authentic situations, as we know. Students may just want to ...but anyway, yes, so there's a lot of interesting things in education, but I think we must work both with the educationalists and the students if we're really going to work towards change.
R I'm going to ask you one final question. It's a big one though. In a perfect world, ok, if you had the power and the authority and the budget, how would you restructure international education to deliver a better outcome for all students, and that's for domestic and international students, in a perfect world.
T Well I think we'd start with the academics and their some sort of training so they do get intercultural, so they are inter-culturally aware. They are inter-culturally proficient, have a good level of awareness in that sense, and they incorporate that and reflect all of that into um, into their curriculum. That they can then pass on to their students. so that students, international, non-international, whatever, just, there is a stronger sense of equity and just ...you know it's an interesting question because even though we've been in the industry ... I speak for myself ...I've been in the industry for decades, you, you have a sense of what you'd

like as a vision but you know that there are so many constraints so you'd best not go there because you'll just have your balloon popped. Um

R But start with the academics?

T Start with the academics, start with that whole sense of .you know... training, where do you want your students to be, what... sort of classrooms do you want to run, in terms of .... . I think academics need to be trained. They can't just be specialists in their fields. But they do need to take up that understanding of teaching. It's probably at government I would like to see governments take, government taking better, more responsibility, with the way it funds universities so there isn't this bridge between researchers and teachers. That universities don't encourage – some universities encourage research over teaching and therefore we have people who are teaching who shouldn't be teaching, and don't take the responsibility of that.

R Because their interest is in research?

TY Yes because they're cash cows for the university and we end up with horrible things happening to students and in amongst the staff environment because there's this emphasis on research, research in that sense. It's just ... I think it's counter-productive...pauses...and if we not taking up the responsibility to reach students then I think we are not really doing what we are supposed to be doing as a university. Um, so in an ideal world it would be a really you know, let's just open it up, have a broad discussion, from government, what are you going to put in place, how's Tesqa going to regulate all of this, to ensure that it happens. What sort of staff do we want in our and what skills do we want, and how...going to ask the students going to ticking off boxes with their Capstone tasks and graduate attributes. How do we relate that back to the teachers? How do we stop, how to ensure that academics are seeing English language not in a deficit view but is something that is developmental and sustainable and part of the whole tapestry. I think if we were honest we'd everyone who is sitting in a university has been challenged by the communication skills and English language of that particular discipline. I don't think anyone has been able to craft an essay easily, or report or whatever.

R Students' language level. Would you be setting a level that was, um, not able to be flouted as it were, because we know students do it, we know universities are compliant or complicit in doing it. Would you have any issue there, or you just think let them come and we will work with what we have.

T No, no I think you have to have a start and I think you know then the universities and the quality assurance agencies take a responsibility to have, to ensure that's all in place, and then I think that's just you know the world we live in you know. There's a sense of regulation and that's an accountability and governance, and I'm comfortable with that. So certainly have an entry level, yes certainly have an entry level, but have it so it's reasonable and meaningful and everyone understands its interpretation, and then know that it's you know, while it's an end point for students to get, end point for the pathway to university, once the university starts, it's seen now as a starting point. Everyone wants to get to IELTS and that's it. But no that's not it, that's the beginning. You've got three years to get to an 8, for someone to get registered as a teacher, or an engineer or whatever it is. You know....but that's not just the text

R No of course now. You've got a lot of experience with IELTS, and I'm just coming back to that IELTS question, because this seems to be where a lot of the students have that view, I that have that IELTS, I'm alright now. How long does it take in your experience to progress a half an IELTS point for an average student?

T I don't know. The more I teach, have taught – and I'm now in management – but the more I've taught I've seen all sorts of things happen, but again I think it's the learner, you know. And I've worked with students who you think, oh for God's sakes, you know, can we just get you over the line, you know, how many months and months and we're working with you, because they plateau. And something is not going, and I think it's Baynon who says there's social social and academic language and communication skills, what conditions do you create for your students to be able to, as perhaps as a pre-entry organisation, to get the student to reach a certain level, comfortably, across the board, you know. And we are talking social English, we're talking academic English, pause... you know, and as you know we have

students who are wonderful writers and do very well in that IELTS band, those ielts bands, but don't do well with their speaking, so I don't know that you can make a time presumption, I think you know if people are starting to be that prescription we're actually in trouble, aren't we, because people look for, and institutions look for and agencies look for, sometimes those clear answers, and if we fall into the trap of trying to provide everything that's quantifiable in that way, um I don't know that we actually do ourselves and our students justice.

R No, no...We're taken...

T But it's good questions, you know, um..., I'm just thinking, you know, I don't ...ah...mmm

R No and it's a very good answer, because there is this approach sometimes, we need to progress like this, and there's a lack of understanding that progression doesn't come our way.

T No language doesn't does it

R I've taken far too much of your time

T I am sorry Robyn but it's just one of those days

R Anything you'd like to add before we finish?

T No, but I would really like to see how you go, it's been so interesting.

R So would I

T It's so topical.

R Well I'll work away on it.

This is an interview with Professor Peter …Professor of Business and Head of the department of …. University.
Professor, thank you for talking with me today. This interview is being recorded but neither your name nor the name of your institution will be identified in my dissertation and your contributions will form part of a chapter of content academics for want of a better word who have influence on international education.
I've given you an information sheet about my project and you've signed a consent form, so I'd like to group my questions into three broad areas. First I'd like to talk about your department's philosophy and challenges regarding international education. Then I would like to talk about some of the feedback I've had already from the students in my study, from other content academics and also from language learning advisers and get you perhaps to respond to some of those things they're saying from your perspective and then finally talk to you about some of your personal experiences and your view about international education and its future. So just starting with your department's experience and philosophy….Typically, what percentage of the student cohort in this faculty are international students?
P That depends very much as to how you define international students because international students can be first generation international **loca**l students here, so I would say for people who are, who may not be speaking English within their households, they are the majority, they are about 80 per cent in the classroom, but recognizing that part of those could possibly be local students but they are just having international background.
R Alright, could you identify international students who've come from abroad to study at your university?
P Yes, we could
R And what percentage do you think that would be?
P That would be about 65
R 65%. OK, and what would be the largest language group or country of origin of those students?
P Chinese
R Chinese. Mainland Chinese?
P Yes.
R OK. What are the key issues for your department in managing that sort of international/domestic student mix?
P The student mix…yeah, it's a good question. Because I think the key challenges primarily are that the international students, they do their own thing amongst themselves. They don't mix well or there is a very tiny percentage of those international students actually do mix well with domestic students. The other challenge is the expectations, and of course putting them together. You're talking about the mix? The international and the domestic students then generally our staff will have to try and cater for the expectations and also the skill set of the international students rather than the local students because of the majority of them are international students. So we might actually end up, the local students end up sort of disinterested or they feel that the university is more concerned about international students, so that creates a sort of sense of perhaps ignoring them. That sort of thing. So those are … I mean, engaging them, and keeping the right balance is actually, engaging both sets, and keeping them, both sets and managing their expectations is the main things.
R OK so that integration issue I'll touch on a little later. Um, why do you think so many Chinese students enrol in accounting and business degrees? The international students from overseas.
P Yes, that's a very traditional thing. And I'm a Chinese so I still remember my father when I was starting off, my father said, 'you do accounting.' Yes? Because it makes money. That's how many years – I'm over sixty…so many many years ago. But one part of it is immigration policy, which you are aware of. But the other part is accounting is generally

perceived as a solid discipline of a good standard, well recognized globally but at the same time give you employment. I think that is generally the Chinese thinking, the Asian thinking.
R OK, so the motivation and expectations are, they follow their family, their employability.
P Employability
R But so many of our international students who choose to stay here don't get jobs, they can't get jobs. Is that something the university concerns itself with?
P Very (strongly emphasised). And of course we are, we're measured by the employability and you know there are survey done for people who have graduated and see what sort of employment they gain and one of the key issues is that, and it is generally known and recognized by staff that the students we've got lack communication skills, or they have they have very little sense of understanding Australian business, and that we are trying to bridge that gap, but then again, bridging that gap may mean we need the curriculum space, and we do not have the curriculum space. I mean accounting is packed on one hand because it is professionally oriented and we do have an accreditation system, and therefore on one hand it's making them aware of the business environment here in Australia and on the other hand is trying to make them feel that they need to learn how to communicate, how to integrate, how to read newspaper, being able to understand the language that is being used. I am not talking about English language.
R Yes, I understand. Let's talk about their language, and I'll come back to our understanding of Western accounting, because I've taught accounting up in Beijing…to a very low level. What language level do students require before they are admitted to your department?
P IELTS 6.5
R 6.5. Which is a reasonable standard. OK, but many of the students come through pathway programs
P Yes
R And they may come with a 5 or a 5.5
P Yes, quite right.
R How do you respond to that? What happens when that happens?
P Well, I can tell you, since I became head of department, this department have been actually known to employ …We have a centre of Macquarie English…we employ them to integrate into our curriculum so that we hope our students, primarily international students, to be able to understand how to write an essay, or to make presentations. And of course that requires funding. Now, so, coming back to the question of how do you meet that sort of challenges, we actively ensure we have that sort of support, language wise. But whether the students take it is another matter. Because because I have to say many of the international students, they could be working as well as studying full time. The y work twenty hours, or some of them may work even longer hours, and they use the weekends to d other things, so they actually are quite often, they sacrifice going into the lectures, and they think, and this is ' a very Asian way of thinking, they think by the end of the time they are close to the examination they can cram it up. Which they can't. So it is a way of expectation are really unlike the Australian education style that they have been approaching their studies here.
R Yes, and coming back to that language level too, my observation from teaching at a couple of universities in Queensland is that the students who need it the most are the students who don't come. But it's not compulsory. Should there be a compulsory….?,
P Well ours is compulsory, compulsory means that … well I mean nothing is compulsory in the sense that you can put a gun behind them and get them to come. But the cme (?) or the English element of it is embedded within their assignment which is compulsory, is embedded in tutorial, which in theory more than likely to have attendance than lecture, because we have large lecture, 500 odd students. But because of cost we have got some lectures on English or communication and we cannot guarantee that they get the benefit of it because they are just not coming.

R Just coming back to this pathway issue too, because 6.5 is the entry level, but it's not unknown for a student to have a 5, or a 5.5.
P Yes
R And can't possibly participate at that level. How do you deal with that? Do you know , can you identify those students. Is there anything you can do to help them or do you just, do they just stay in the program until they exit the other end with a pass or a fail.
P It's a big question because we try to deal with them, deal with it. …well in the initial stage before they start I think the university does have some programs in terms of getting them to be oriented. And the faculties actually have been doing quite a lot of things in terms of conversation group and support group and so on and within the curriculum and within the department on say what I am able to influence, it's just the way how we teach and the way how we schedule our syllabus and what I have done also is to employ massively, I mean, last year I can tell you, or previous years we actually paid $250,000 **for just language support** of the international students.
R Within the department?
P Within the department. Right. So it's a huge investment, and because of budgetary situation we cannot continue with that. And that's the whole thing. So this time I can tell you, 2013, I'm looking at….well this is obviously perhaps internal as well, the Macquarie English people, they provide the English in a very generic sense. There's English support, which like, how do you greet people and so on. But in the accounting side, they need more accounting, English which are used for accounting report, English which are used in the professional firms, in accounting as such. So I actually now I am contracting another third party which is called Performance Education, which actually does the government's PY (?) English program for general international student graduates. They are now coming in to provide workshops for students, and again I don't want to segregate international from domestic. I have to say as well….the English language some of the domestic students have the same problem. And therefore we are trying to do that. We do have a resource issue, but we are actively working towards that but we cannot make them come or make them because let's say when there is a language thing and here is an assignment, they don't want to do the assignment, and its just the same thing, and they don't get the benefit.
R Yes, I'll come to this one in a moment, but just staying on the language issues because you say you are going to have some changes this year and you won't be able to offer that same level of language support.
P Not the same level. When I am now having the cme to do the postgraduate level which is actually looking at how to write a report, how to do a presentation. Whereas the undergraduate level I have another organisation which again does large lectures and it has to be voluntary, but we make it very highly recommended to come. And then we talk about communication skills, things like that.
R When a student comes through SIBT for example do you think there's …it's enough that there's that internal language testing within SIBT or one of the language schools? Do you think there should be another IELTS test so you're comparing…..

P I have, yes, I do agree that there should be a similar to IELTS and when I was negotiating the budget one of the things I would like to do is have our students tested with their IELTS whatever test the language skills before they graduate just immediately before. So okay you come up with 6.5 or 5.5 with the foundation program coming and then throughout these three years or two years they speak their own language within their own group, they work, they don't attend classes, they sometimes may be copying one another's work. You can't really see the standard of the English when they come out. So I was trying to do but the cost is horrendous. It was totally impossible for me to do it. So I can't do it. Which is a sad thing.
R It is a sad thing.
P And again, the other thing which I would like to add the argument, I can tell you, at university level, which I was quite amazed, you may know that in Tesqa, we actually are

responsible to ensure that our students are capable of getting employment or the capability side. And I believe is our responsibility to help them. And of course when they are recruited we should be very sure that they are having the capability of continuing. Unfortunately there is an element within the university sector that they would feel that, 'is it our responsibility to do that?" "Should the students do their own?" sort of thing. So I think they are coming around to it . Yes we do have the kind of responsibility to support and develop further those student skills but at the end of the day it's going to be, yeah, it's costly.

R There are five students in my study, one girl in particular, I'll give you her experience and you might like to comment on it. She came to Macquarie, she did a degree here. She did a hospitality course with an associated institution, then went on to the University of New South Wales and did a masters degree in Finance. She'd tested at IELTS 6 in speaking before she came to university, and when she did her migration test, she tested at 5.5, lost her opportunity for permanent residence, and went back to China. I mean, how does that happen? Where a very good student, tried very hard to integrate and not live within the Chinese community, is that a test function, or how does that happen?

P I don't think that's a test function. I think it's really I suppose we don't know how they live and how they work and how they engage with one another, and how they do their study, how they approach their study, how they're thinking. We really don't know. And I mean studies like yours are important. I don't think it is just the testing. I was going to say that, people were arguing against testing at the end of the course is because IELTS test is the only one test they can think of but it is supposed to be an entry test and it's not supposed to be an exit test.

R Nevertheless it's a migration test

P Yes

R That's the issue. So, just in terms of delivery of programs, curriculum issues, what considerations come into play when you have this large cohort of international students?

P What do you mean?

R OK, well, your academics for example. How are they prepared to teach to international students. Do they have any particular professional development. You know, some academics who may have been teaching in faculties for a very long time to mostly domestic students

P I do give them professional development and I have to say this department have got a lot of international staff right? And of course one thing to teach international students is that you have to speak clearly, slowly and to collapse complex concepts into simple ideas and engage with them. Many of our staff, this is actually a continuing dilemma of academic managers in accounting. On one hand it's very difficult to recruit accounting lecturers. On the other hand we need lecturers who have a PhD. Having a PhD in accounting is not common, and therefore we hire people who let's say come from a foreign country who have a PhD or freshly have a PhD. They don't know to teach. And when they don't know how to teach and they are confronted with kids, 80% of them are international students who have a totally different view a out to solve particular concepts, then they need development. And I have to say before my time there hasn't been that sort of development done for the staff. I mean I am trying just last year I hire somebody, a consultant, $20,000 to have small group staff to really teach them all to develop their skills of being able to communicate with foreign language people, and being able to do it effectively.

R Yeah, because there are very special pedagogic issues

P That's right, that's right

R And students who come from a different cultural background, who typically command e from large classes and a passive learning style

P Yes, yes

R and all of a sudden we want them to engage and speak up and debate…

P That's right, that's right. That's right. And because of the class size. Because Chinese class sizes, they are fifty at maximum. Here's we've got five hundred. So it's it becomes really very daunting for the person coming in to study here.

R One of the comments from a student, a very good student in my case study, was, he said, 'Robyn, I came here, I had my foundation program in China, I had three years of my undergraduate degree, I got used to a Western education where my lecturers were saying, 'I'm not going to tell you the answer, I'm going to tell you how to find it', and in my master's degree my accounting lecturers were Chinese and they were saying, 'let's look at what's on the exam paper.' Is that the sort of dilemma?

P It is. But I think education is changing as well in Australia where we are now. I mean, obviously it is the way how the …….of education in China works against how we approach education here in Australia. It is actually yes, they want to know the answer. But knowing the answer doesn't mean they've learned a thing. So therefore we actually are now converting our staff in ensuring they are able to go through a process of thinking. Whether the answer is to absolutely the same answer as is suggested is different. It's actually not necessarily the key thing. So yes, I think that is a key issue. But we need to teach the lecturers to be able to do that. And we need to be able to educate the students to be able to understand it's not the answer, it's the thought process, it's the reasoning of it. Especially nowadays, we are talking about learning outcomes. We are talking about people who can come out with the ability to analyse, to present, to defend. So that's where, we are actually changing but it is a long haul I understand. And it is going to be a change expectation that is needed, in terms of students.

R In terms of the lecturers how do they adapt to that professional development. And I'll give you a few comments soon about what I've been hearing from some of the people I've been talking to in terms of the study. But what's your general sense about how do academics take on this new….

P I can only look at my staff's reaction. The PD I have arranged for them, and I've got a report from the consultant, at first , well first of all our staff there are quite a lot of Chinese as well. And then we have got a pocket of older members of staff, or more longer serving members of staff, and some are very very young very new, so we've got a big gap there. The older generation, they find it very difficult … 'why is it that P wants me to do this?' I have been teaching for so many years'. And I think the consultant did say they started off with a very resentful kind of attitude but they turned around. They did. And in fact all the responses that came back, unsolicited, they said that they gained a lot from those courses, or from those PD that I arranged for them.

R Over what period was that?

P Well that was just last year. In the previous year what I did was, and that's something else, what I did was, I got a consultant to help the elocution of the staff. Because the staff, the staff has got an accent which is not necessarily well, let's say if you are not experienced and you are not speaking to the mike, and you are not speaking clearly, and with an accent, you are going to turn off students. So I did that, last year, or the year before last. No last year. And that was well received. But the thing is, well you are taking a day of my time I want to do research, because that is the other thing, I don't know whether you cover that, and that's the performance evaluation of the staff. Staff will be evaluated more regularly based on research record of output, than teaching.

R Yes, it keeps coming up a lot. In fact one of the comments from the content academics, "The development of international education has considerably impacted my workload and the way in which I teach." One of them said, 'there are too many students wanting extra help. I don't have time to consult with all of them." Is that an issue with the international students, that they want to go to a lecturer and sit down and have some time. Is there enough time for that?

P They want …I don't think that is an issue, but with the volume, yes. In other words we could have 20, or we could have 50 students who thought that they would need help. But staff would be just putting up 2 hours, and they would have to make those two hours for consultation. What we have been doing now,, is we are assigning tutors who are now required to put in two hours of consultation for the students. Just to cater for the large volume of international students. But again, this is the mentality; that they would like to speak to the lecturers not the tutors. So the lecturers they would be compromising their research time,

that is true. So, therefore, they would be looking at, OK, I can only put in minimum two hours a week, and whoever comes, can get support.
R It's not a lot of time, is it, if you are teaching 500.
P. No, exactly. Well, no, 500 is one class. We could be, our class size or our unit sizes, our unit enrolment could come up to one thousand one hundred, one thousand eight hundred.
R So are you saying a lecturer …
P We have to speed up the lecture. The lecture theatre can only accommodate 500. So you can have a three lecture stream.
R I see. So in that two hour consultation block, how many students would a lecturer typically be responsible for, potentially how many could come?
P Yeah, and depending very much on the lecturer. Um, and of course some of the students would like to have a one on one, but some of the lecturers say, you come in groups; you come in small groups, say two or three. So if all three of you want to explain a little bit more about integrated reporting, we speak to you in that group. So we could be having let's say more than the two hours can be accommodate. So typically we could be looking at ten, fifteen. That's not many. And I have to say, as I say, it depends very much on the staff. I know that one of the staff that's very dedicated would like to help anyone who comes. He spent a lot of time on every single request. So any student who comes to him, he would be spending half an hour with that student, which cuts down…
R So that must put a tremendous amount of stress on him, if he's trying to manage teaching, research, curriculum development and consultation with students. Because that's one of the common complaints from the students. 'I go to see my lecturer who says, 'I've got ten minutes', and one in particular said, 'I need more than ten minutes. I don't understand'. That's a common complaint. That's not manageable, is it?
P It's not manageable. It is very difficult to manage. And at the end of the day we need to be able to help the students to self-manage. And I should say, in the faculty we do have PAL, P A L, leaders and they are senior students and we employ them and they work in groups and they help younger…
R Like a mentoring program
P And there are classes run by the PAL senior students, the third year, run a small class of 20, and they are not allowed to be helping them with assignment. They will just be helping them with particular concept. And it is open to all. You just go to the PAL for the first level accounting, second level management accounting, and they will do that. And we are doing it very well, actually. Lots and lots of students have taken advantage of that.
R OK , that's the balance you're looking for in trying to provide a level of support but not over burdening lecturers.
P Yeah.
R One of the other comments that has come from academics and from students is about plagiarism and cheating, and one lecturer said to me (not in this university I hasten to add), 'Plagiarism and cheating are endemic. We don't seem to be able to stop it.' Do you have a feeling about plagiarism and cheating, and how this university deals with it?
P I would have to agree. Um, it is the way how the students work. The short term is some, the lack of understanding of what is meant by plagiarism, and the practices and as I've said they work full-time, or they work many hours, I can tell you we , I have actually instituted a major plagiarism case and we found about 80 odd student plagiarized in a particular assignment. And basically they just buy we did whatever. And there's a market there. So we did a lot of things. We identified the market, who was running it, the processes and of course we actually, I personally with a couple of my staff, went to the lecture theatre and invited all those people who have plagiarism case, same case, said to them, 'this is what you have done, this is what the evidence shows' and therefore we need you to actually give us a declaration whether you think you have either done this, this this or that. And if you haven't, well let's hear the case because we need to actually investigate each one of them. Which we did. And then some of them actually said 'I bought it, I don't know why, I bought it using 70 dollars.

And some other said 'no, we just work together. We just work together as a group.' So we identified various level of plagiarism or misconduct, and the whole case went over all the way to the university disciplinary and so on. We have to go through very very legalistically and at the end of the day each one of the major culprits, they actually appealed with all sort of different things and I think it ended up only about four who were excluded.

R Oh really? Out of 80? So you've got low level plagiarism, cheating you might call and then it sort of scales up?

P Well it is also very much as to ..because you could have . … I mean they actually they can appeal. We actually have got all deans sitting around different rooms, listening to all the appeals. I can tell you, it was a major exercise .

R I am sure it was.

P And all the appeals, they come back, 'no his is what I did.' And they got new evidence, I don't how, alright? Laughs. But ..

R It is quite sophisticated isn't it?

P Exactly. So of course the university is very careful about it. And you can't actually be seen to be doing the wrong thing to the international students, or you have to actually have full evidence. So yeah, at the end of the day it was only a few people who got….But there were different degree. There were some of them if it's just copied amongst the whole group and they presented it and so on and then we have a less amount of penalty.

R Is this a cultural issue too? Because I know I've taught in China and I've taught in Vietnam, and it's very much this supportive culture where, and I always find it very difficult in plagiarism issue cases there, because on the one hand we say 'work in groups, help each other'. Oh, but you can't do this.' And they find that very very difficult.

P They find it difficult. I agree it is a cultural issue because I think Chinese or Vietnamese or in the Asian culture they believe in one single answer. And whatever is out there, that is the answer. And therefore they don't see it as as something that they have to contribute, I mean they have to challenge. And therefore that is the answer they'll put in and that will be the correct answer, and that is it, and you mark my answer. So it is that sort of cultural….yeah

R And the culture of supporting each other?

P Yes that's right. And they don't want to talk, tell people , to tell other peoples….sorry, to sort of um tell the staff as to who were the people who sold the assignment and that sort of thing.

R Some of my students have said to me and some of them have come here, they've said, online quizzes, we just give someone our student number, we do the online quizzes for them. It's only 5 per cent' etc etc. I mean, how do universities possibly deal with that?

P With lots of difficulty. Lots of difficulty. I can tell you with that particular case of the over 80, it was an online project . And we have got an expert, who designed it in such a way that's it is all random, so that your assignment is different from mine, your answer will be different from mine, but we talk about the same thing. And yet they still do that. They can still do that. And that actually hired thatperson to come back and look at every single answer , what are the likely evidence that they are….Because let's say someone who actually wrote a particular word wrongly, it appears in every single other ones, and we just look at those little things. Technologically it's difficult, it's time consuming, it's costly, and it actually cost that person who designed the assignment technologically, who have done everything and have found that so many plagiarized, he actually have a nervous breakdown.

R Oh, goodness

P Yeah. He just couldn't believe it happened.

R And this is a case you're aware of. There must be ….

P Yeah, that is the exact case.

R It must be happening every where, every day?

P I think so. And I know that there's another university in Queensland which actually has experience of a major plagiarism case as well.

R So what's the answer? Is there an answer?

P Education is the only one, and it's very difficult. I don't know the answer. The only answer is just really making sure that ah, they will self discipline. Especially with the large number, you can't discipline them. It's just self discipline. I know that if you discipline them in some of those cases it's such a pity right? You could have … to be honest, the people who are little or the big brothers who actually help all the other people to do the same assignment, they are bright kids. Alright? They are really good kids. And yet they did that. And it comes back to the same support you were saying, they help one another.
R Right, so they may not do it for monetary gain?
P They may not.
R They just want to help someone who's struggling.
P Yeah, yeah.
R They don't understand the concepts?
P Yeah, and it comes back to the whole cultural issue of the international environment they are living in, they don't have the time, they're under pressure, their parents are pressurizing them,
R A lot of expectations from their family.
P Yeah, yeah.
R OK. Just talking about assessment, when you set assessment and when your academics are marking, it is purely the content they are looking at, or do they mark for language as well?
P Well what do you mean by …..we allow the lack of language or grammar into the answers, we allow that
R What do you mean?
P Well let's say a person put in two words which doesn't make any sense, we're trying to grasp what it is and give marks .
R OK so you are really looking at the content and if their language isn't so great you don't penalize them if they have grammar mistakes or language mistakes
P No, no. If it is a research paper if it is a higher level honours program, then yes.
R But not for undergraduates?
P For first level, we wouldn't. We would give them the benefit of the doubt.
R OK that's fine. We've covered so many of these questions.
Some academics I've spoken to say that, these are the older academics that you've talked about, they say that since we started introducing so much international education, assessment has changed and now I'm being pushed towards setting multiple choice, short answer, to compensate for the poor language skills of our students. Have you got a comment on that?
P Ah, I think first of all setting multiple choice questions are not used solely because of international education. It is because people are time poor; they want to make it fast because of the volume. I mean, accounting education itself is of high volume, basically. So that's one side, and of course what complicates it is the lack of language from many of the students. So, yes, I mean, setting multiple choice is one side.
R So is that more effective in terms of marking for example?
P Yeah, yeah
R And easier to administer?
P Yeah, it's more the administration part. Because I can tell you we are talking about….we could be looking a, oh, I don't know, 90,000 scripts to be marked over a matter of two weeks. And by really two weeks. And then the finishing of the exam is about one and a half week, we have the exam meeting, alright? All the staff, every Tom, Dick and Harry will be doing all that, getting the marks on time, and getting it call calculated, grading, everything. So that's just that. And so with respect it's not necessarily because of the international students.
R Alright. It's all to do with volume.
P Yeah
R But the volume comes from international education?
P Exactly

R So it's not exactly to cater for their language skill but simply there are so many of them
P That's right .
R One of my students said, in his two degrees, he wrote two papers and they were case studies, and he only ever wrote short answer and multiple choice . Is that the sort of student, is that sort of assessment really helping a student who may go into an accounting firm and be expected to write a report?
P No, I totally agree, and I think, l mean, yesterday I just had a staff in and basically apparently the phenomenon is a the number of staff who wants to make it quick or who want to make sure they don't have too high a fail rate. If it's a short answer question it makes it easier to mark, makes it easier for students to write answers in, and therefore it is of an easier path way and I had that problem because I feel that the standard of that unit had deteriorated. And therefore it always is the whole question of where is those comprehensive case studies, provoking thinking skills and things like that. It's not there. And we're changing around there, making sure, because we want the standard as well. Especially now we have to be looking at all the learning outcomes have to be mapped with the assessment and everything, and you can't say you've achieved analytical skill when you have one sort of fill in the blank type of answer, right? And so you've got to map it. So we are training the staff to really read, to perhaps redevelop their skills back to real perhaps education.
R But how do you manage it if you've got these…I mean, it's a dilemma isn't it. You've got these short answer, multiple choice because you might have 90,000 scripts to mark. If you have 90,000 case studies to mark?
P So we are now moving perhaps to the less dependent on examination, so if you have the full year to try to cater for different learning outcomes, and try to ensure that those skills are being developed early on and that less dependent on the final exam, that is one way. But truly, it is going to be a difficult thing.
R And if you move back to a case study or to a longer answer then you're opening yourself up to plagiarism, surely?
P Yes, and also more work, because what happened is we we just recently, we just have a new policy that all examination papers has to be in the library, open and public. Which I believe in. I think all examinations should be public documents but do you know that the staff said, you know, every single time I prepare a paper I prepare three sets, supplementary, and sub-supplementary, and this group or that group and so on, and you are saying that I can't reuse the exam papers, right, so do you know how much time I need to write the exam paper of 3 hours. I mean some people especially for comprehensive cases, you find you need a week to actually do a properly case question. We don't have the time to do that. So it is a dilemma…the whole notion of education is actually a big big complex issue of challenges.
R It's a resource issue, isn't it? What you're talking about?
P Yeah, yeah.
R Because you've got volumes of students coming in, and probably your resourcing is just inadequate to deal …?
P Yeah, yeah. Laughing …. So would you like to be head of department?
R Both laugh …. Yes, I don't think so.
I am just looking, there was one question I did want to ask, yes. One of the other things I've heard from academics is they feel pressured to pass international students. Sometimes it's overt, sometimes it's covert, sometimes it comes from the students, but it does come from faculties. Do you have ???
P I have to say…obviously…I have to say, I just finished a year here, so ever since I started here I actually sensed that culture, and I actually made it very clear to the staff, I don't care if you fail, provided you actually put your hand on your heart and say that, yes this is what I've done. The exam is fair. The topic has been delivered properly and that the way I marked is all adequate and everything is covered and the quality is there. I will stand by it. And it actually took a long time for the staff to understand that.
R You felt that the staff were …
P They had that sort of perception, yeah, they had that perception

R OK
P And that's where the case where I said just now, where I said the staff where they make a simple exam so that it is easier for them, less people fail and so on, so it's win/win. So I actually made it very clear to my staff here, I have been defending over 50% fail rate to the Dean, and fortunately this Dean actually do accept that. And I said, look you don't want unemployability at the end of the year, at the end of the day. And if you pass these students, these students will be getting a (university) degree and they don't get any job. So you can't. And especially we do not have any control over incoming students, that's the problem, and therefore the only way it's stopping…
R It's the quality control?
P It's the quality control.
R So are you saying 50% of international students are failing?
P No, 50% of students
R So how does that compare with the international versus domestic?
P It's actually more or less the same; it's more or less the same. But I'm talking about previously and I have to say, now, just last semester, we worked very hard, we worked very hard to help the students and so on ,and we also have, you might not have that, the students at risk program. At the students who were at risk, who had to do the subject for the third time for example, we actually have a program to help them to pass, I mean to help them to understand, help them to practice and so on
R Some extra
P Yeah. So we were able to achieve last time we had very very good results. So we didn't actually identify if they were international students or not. It's all in one go. But I think last year or the year before we had very high fail rate and it is always a tough time trying to defend. And at faculty level there is always some older generation especially who feels that 'well they come here, they pay so much money, they should pass' and all the rest of it. Yeah, we all know that. And it's not that we want to fail people, but at the end of the day you've got to defend the degree.
R Yeah, Yeah, the quality is important because that's the source of your ongoing students, isn't it?
P Yeah, Yeah, it's the reputation as well.
R If you degrade your degree and the university's degree.
I am just conscious of your time, and there are just a couple more questions.
You talked very briefly about deferred exams; students deferring exams. Is that common here?
P Yeah. Yes. I can tell you just now we handle about a thousand special considerations and special considerations means that they fell sick before, after, during the exam and then they have a mentality when you give them special consideration that means they have a supplementary exam. So we have to write, at the time when we prepare our exam paper, we have to write a deferred paper. But the unfortunate thing is it is always again – being Chinese myself I know, alright – they negotiate. OK? They negotiate. So when they negotiate, I've got this or that or so on, they expect to be able to have another, and there are, we experience really frustratingly that students don't feel the need, ok you are granted a special exam, or a supplementary deferred exam, you'd better come and so. And they don't.
R Oh really?
P Well some of them say, well I'm going to be in China, blah blah. And so on. So they expect us to give them another one. So at the end of the day we have been giving supplementary over supplementary over supplementary. At the end of the day it's enough. We can't do that. Because we have to stop somewhere. So yes, there is a very massive culture of being able to use the system and I have to say Macquarie actually have a system which is actually geared towards in favour of the students. I think it could be common to many of the universities.
R Yeah,
P So therefore students know the loopholes and they know how to use them.

R Use them. Why do they use deferred exams?
P To prolong the time. And um…
R Do they actually use the time?
P We don't know obviously. But they would then get all the intelligence of the main exam, and yes, I mean some are genuine. Really, some are genuine case .
R What percentage would apply to deferred exams? In a given year?
P OK there would be let's say you have a typical number of deferred exams, people taking deferred exams would be about five, six hundred students. And you could be looking at … well….if you look at percentages it's still a low percentage of eight thousand students altogether. But in the undergraduate I think we have about six thousand students altogether, so every time five or six hundred….
R So about ten per cent? That must increase your workload enormously?
P Yeah
R So you set an exam, a deferred exam, then another deferred exam?
P And it's not just the setting. It's the result. And then we have to make sure we have to change the grade, and everything. Because then the students have to be waiting for that to enroll in the second – because we now have three semesters or three sessions - so everything is sort of pressured, time pressured.
R so is there case then to actually just say no. to just say…to get tough.
P That's what I did. So I said we are only offering one deferred exam and no more. So in other words if you are not able to come for that, you have to wait until the subject is next offered.
R It comes up next time
P And then join the others.
R My students say to me, 'look everyone knows the doctor to go to, to get an exam. One student said that her friend ate a raw potato just before going into the exam so she could be sick …the lengths. There are some extreme lengths. Alright, So when did you start cracking down on those deferments?
P It's actually last year
R And you've seen a result from that already?
P I can't say that I have seen the result. So I can't say. It maybe comes up….
R Eventually
P Yeah.
R Just let's finally … talking to you personally about your experiences and where you think international education is going…I mean, managing this large international domestic cohort must be very very challenging. What do you think are the benefits. We talk a lot about the difficulties, but what are the benefits of this program?
P Oh there are definitely a lot of benefits and I have to say that we have got very good staff and they help the international…..they're young, bright, dedicated committed international students and you can see the change and the kind of exposure that they have and they made it and so on, and obviously their experience can be equally enriching for our local students, and I think that if they can integrate better then I think the local students will benefit a lot. And we have got staff who have been trying to engage with international students and they know so much of the lives of the international students, how they struggle, and at the same time how they made it and they were very happy. The satisfaction is much higher, I have to say. And there are definitely the diversity and the experience and so on. And there are definitely things to learn. Definitely things to learn. But I think it's just a matter of our …not controlling but making sure the right people come into the university system, and acknowledging the standards of the university that it has to adhere to. And of course the expectation is really about expectations, and how to bridge them and how to make them learn.
R You said earlier though that you can't manage the students coming in, you can only manage the exit.
P Yes

R So it's what you do in those intervening years becomes critical, obviously.
P Yes, yes. Because it's totally out of our hands who come in. And again we have tried and asked for increasing the IELTS score. We can't do that.
R Who says you can't do it?
P The university
R The university
P Which means that it is very difficult for us. I have to say there is an economic issue and at the same time there could be fake IELTS test as well…so (laughs)
R Well I have to say the five students in my study, not one of them came with an IELTS 6.5. All came with a 5, or a 5.5, did a little bit of language, then straight into their….following the pathways without further testing, so, really…..
P I can tell you …yeah. I mean, I was upstairs at the faculty office and I was asked. They have 249 kids who are finishing their English language courses here and they want the Dean to talk to them. And of course I mean the Dean is not available, Professor Peter can you do that? And this is tomorrow, and I have no idea what they are doing, what they would like to do. These are 249 kids who just finished their language skill, most of them they will come to Accounting they said.
R Well yes,
P That's why they ask me to do that. So I don't know….Baby (PA) has to find what time to speak what do I need to speak on (laughs).
R Well you can start by laying down the law about deferred exams and expectations (both laugh).

Alright, changes to government policy. There have been a lot of changes. Changes to language levels for which students can score points for migration, they no longer get points for higher degrees. Has that changed the composition here.
P Yes.
R What's happened as a result of …
P You're talking about Accounting?
R Yes
P We are decreasing in numbers. That is a very clear change.
R And you think that is to do with government policy?
P Yeah, yeah. Very much. And obviously the currency and so on, and all the rest of it. I have to say (our university) and Accounting still have a very good reputation in China and so on, but now we are losing that ...and also we are highly competitive as well within Sydney. And of course many of the Chinese families, they look at it. 'which are the universities with higher reputation'. I mean, I don't know whether you are aware during the ….or cut off , the enrolment period, just last couple of weeks where the kids, when they finish their secondary school, they're entering into university, and they were choosing universities, the kind of competition amongst universities. They are giving you an ipad, ringing you up, and say that, 'can you drop Macquarie? Choose me, and then I will give you this.' We're doing that. Macquarie doesn't want to do that, but all the other universities are doing it.
R So they are offering incentives for students to change their enrolment?
P Yeah. So you can see the high competition. They are attracting …..'I will give you ipad, everyone who come here, I will give you an ipad.' Well you know where to go.
R So is that for domestic students and international?
P Yeah. There isn't any distinction especially … … in Macquarie the distinction in terms of income to the department and faculties, there's no difference. A domestic student or an international student, it just makes no difference, we just have two numbers. Of course the university will get a fee, a bonus. But other universities are not having the same system. So other universities, if they're international students, obviously they are much higher income earning.
R Are you saying international students coming here, they pay the same as domestic students?
P They pay differently, but the income that comes to the department is the same.

R OK, alright. The other thing, the other change to government policy is that students who want to apply, who want to apply for permanent residence, no longer get points for doing a masters degree, so has that affected enrolments in higher education, in the masters programs?
P We, ah. Yes, but then what we have been doing is, there's also obviously the duration because of the AQF and so on. What we have been doing in the last year or s, I'm trying to gear towards the domestic market now, so we are building programs which are more of a domestic market nature. So meaning, that I, let's say that we have a very good relationship with CPA Australia and therefore we are running programs, particularly for those who graduate with an accounting degree, for Australia. so it's really more or less for a domestic market.
R So, are you saying that international education is going to play less of a role?
P Absolutely! I think so.
R Oh, that's a very interesting perspective. How does that affect your department in terms of staffing and those…….?
P It will affect it. It will definitely affect it. But we are moving on the higher level in such a way that we are moving onto research exchanges and so on, so therefore I am managing the financial aspect of it. It could be staff lost.
R Because of the downturn in international education?
P Yeah.
R Could you put a % on the downturn that you've seen over the last 12 months, two years?
P OK we would be looking at about a ten per cent decrease. ..Ten to fifteen per cent decrease.
R OK, and that's…..
P Of student numbers.
R OK. And that's to do with changing migration. And uncertainty, too. My students……
P Uncertainty. And as I said, the currency.
R The currency is very high, of course.
P And of course I don't know how much safety or security plays, because of you know the Indian experience and so on. So I don't know. But still, Asian market actually plays on word of mouth so it's very much dependent on are they comfortable coming in here?. It's very interesting, there are international *families*, who come and look around, how safe the place is, before they allow their kids to come. And that does happen.
R That's come through very strongly with my students. That their parents want them to come to Australia because more egalitarian, less racism, etc. Which is …heartening.
P Mmm, mmm.
R We have covered so much, and that you very much for ….
P That's alright.
R The frankness of your interview. Is there anything you would like to contribute in terms of my topic, or anything you think I've missed? Or any pressing issues from where you sit?
P Mmm, I actually feel that, um, pauses ….I think I think academic managers , I feel that … and I'm going to do that, is to use the diversity in accounting in terms of the staff, to be able to enhance the experience of our international students. I think obviously enhancing the international students' experience is very important. We have staff who actually help our international students to really engage with their local community, Australian community, and they enjoyed it. They really feel…it's not just ……Perhaps I think in accounting a lot of emphasis has been placed on content. A lot of emphasis has been placed on um, yes, do this accounting. Very straightforward technical aspects. But less emphasis on the human side. And I think the human side, I have to say perhaps is not just accounting but the whole of the university don't, are not good at the human side, alright. They are not good, in terms of supporting staff on the human side. The staff don't feel that they can have the time nor the energy nor the trade off to support the students on the human side and therefore it becomes very …well, it is a vicious

cycle. They can't do that. On the other hand, I think Macquarie, the previous vice-chancellor, we actually have changed the curriculum, the requirement of the curriculum in, such a way that all our programs have to have a participation unit, a planet unit

R which unit, sorry?

P A participation unit, which is where students have to interact with community, have to interact with profession, have to interact with business outside. A planet unit, students have to understand environment issues, alright? A PPP, is a people unit. Students have to do something on the people side. Totally outside the curriculum. But you have to do it. Those whole three.

R So that helps that integration

P Exactly

R And avoids that ghettoization

P And therefore you could have domestic and international students doing the same thing and going to mountain walks together, and that sort of thing.

R So that's something the university insists on?

P This University has insisted on. It has started last year and this year and that's why I am actually working on ……..participation unit, which is actually getting the industry, getting people to understand students and getting students to interact with them.

R That's wonderful

P Yes, but the high volume it's a challenge.

R It certainly is a challenge

P Laughs….yes, how do we actually get 600 kids out into the community and talk to them….I mean they, they won't get to the door.

R Yes certainly it is a challenge. But that's the issue that's going to move these students forward. Help with their language, help with their cultural understanding.

P Yes. And communication, and so on.

R Very important.

Professor thank you so much for your interview. I'm most grateful for your time.

P That's alright. I hope it helps.

R Most definitely it has.

Continues

R Professor, after I turned off my tape, we started to talk about short-term-ism and you expressed some concerns about that. Would you just develop that for me.

P Yeah, because I think the fact that we saw plagiarism, the increase of plagiarism, that the student, we talk about international students who actually work while they are studying, but they just have a wrong expectation of what the system can cater for them, but at the same time I think they do have an expectation that they can put in not the maximum amount of effort but get the result. I think there is a strong degree of getting….I mean, Chinese are very strong at getting titles. Positions. Output. But not necessarily understand the way how they will have to put in, how they have to self manage, and I think Chinese are poor at that because of the culture of group think. Because there is a very large group think. Because you are told what to do. Your part is this part. You don't need to worry about other bit. You just do that part well. And the worst thing about international students is that they are so trained to be cater for a certain element of definitely that they will just work towards that. So they don't see the self-management. They don't see that they have to put extra effort, whereas in Australia it's very much leaving it up to you to strive to do your best. But then that sort of education is not sort of underpinning framework in the Chinese mind. So therefore they are short term. I mean there is a very strong short term culture. Why I see that is it's coming from me, from Hong Kong. One thing which I said which was the best thing of the colonial, the UK sort of governance in Hong Kong, UK, the mentality they developed standard, they developed structure, and standard, and really, quality and so on. And therefore when I got back to Hong Kong after the 1997, I saw how much glamour in it, but not the quality. And I felt, I can't understand. I mean, I have to say when I compare with many of my peers who are non-Chinese and I can see that the way we look at things, the way our upbringing, the standard, the

quality are very important and therefore is a sort of long, work hard ……..but then when I saw how glamorous . and how many people were trying to get to that end product without having to go through all those processes, and I see that there is such a strong short-term culture in it, and I felt that it is actually the mainland Chinese culture, because they saw how bright outside of China has been, and they want to get to that. And Chinese are impatient. I am impatient. laughs So that sort of mentality actually underpins a lot of situations what I saw in Chinese students, in international students. They want to get the letters; they want to get the outcome. .You just give me a pass.. We have seen many students, 'tell me what I need to do. Just tell me'. Name the figure. Do it. We just want that'. And I have seen many of those.

R So getting the degree is the end, it's not what the degree will achieve.

P Exactly! They don't care. Or not that they don't care, they don't appreciate that it shows who you are, not what you have turned out as to many degrees you have. But perhaps it is the education culture within China, that they have been so used in a communist, or what they have been used to, their parents' upbringing. And what they have been told, 'this is what it is'. But I think it is changing. I think more of the Chinese families are more outlooking and longer term thing. I must say I am so shocked. I mean, when you go to China, and you've been to China obviously, I saw that if you look at the hotels, they are so glamorous, right? It's just unbelievable. I can see the way how they worked and how people working in hotels, and they were so glamorous, and yet they were wearing runners, and the runners were full of soil, dirt and so on. And you can see that. Where's that? I mean how is that going to align with what you think is good? And I don't know, it's just the quality, the sense of maintenance, the quality is not there.

R I understand perfectly what you are talking about. I've seen that many times and it seems so dichotomous when you come from a different culture to see that and not understand.

P That's my theory. That is the short term.

R Well that's a very interesting …obviously you have a very good understanding of the cultural underpinning of that short termism as you call it.

Very interesting. And I'll stop again.

Interview with Sarah and Ian

R Alright so I'm recording now and I'll just thank you for agreeing to talk to me today in this joint interview. The interview will be, is being recorded but neither your names nor your institutions will be identified in my dissertation. I'll send you a complete information sheet which I should have already done and you've already got a consent form which you can return to me at your leisure.

S I don't think I do have the consent form actually. I don't think it was attached but I can check that. But if you can send them both at the same time and we'll get those back to you.

R Alright fine, that's no problem at all. Thank you. Sorry about that. OK, so today we are just going to talk about three broad questions. And I'm not going to ask you too many questions. You need to be able to talk freely about issues that you see are important, not the ones that I necessarily think are. But in the first little bit, about your universities' and departments' philosophy and challenges with international education. Then I'd like to put to you some of the feedback from students and other interviewees to see what sort of reaction you have to that, and then I'd like you to share your personal experiences, the highlights, the lowlights etc. So, let's just start by asking approximately what percentage of the student cohort in the classes you teach or your department are international students?

S Wow, I would say in mine it's probably anything up to 40%.

R Significant.

S Oh yes.

R Ian?

J In the MBA class is probably about 20 to probably 30 percent. That is for the on campus, face to face teaching. However I have external students or distance learning students as well as a large cohort of students who are based in Singapore and we supply all the materials, we moderate everything, but there is a local tutor to deliver and see the students but we send one of our lecturers there to deliver part of the unit there.

R Alright

S Yes we have lots as well. We have to manage lots of offshore places as well.

R Just thinking about your onshore students for a moment, what ethic group forms the largest percentage?

S Well I think from my point of view, I think that up until now it has been probably been, it's very difficult to say actually. Chinese from PRC, but, we do get Chinese from Malaysia. We have Vietnamese, we have people from Singapore directly and a lot, quite a few, a number from Mauritius, who may be of Indian or French decent, and also a lot of Indians. But the move is definitely towards India at the moment.

R Right, OK that's interesting. Ian?

J It's probably similar in a sense. I reckon it's the south-east Asian and I couldn't be certain that they are all from China. That would be Vietnam, that would be Thailand that would be Malaysia and China, so I wouldn't be able to distinguish precisely, accurately, in percentages. The second, largest group is the Indian, Pakistani area and then Middle East and then Europe, and then South America.

R OK, that's an interesting mix. In terms of your university's motivation in recruiting international students, obviously there's an economic imperative. Is there a philosophical move towards expanding the university's offerings I suppose? Making it a better place? Internationalizing?

S I don't buy that. I think it's actually all about money and I don't believe that the situation is handled well of all in terms of the international students and their needs, their issues and how they interact with the local people. I think it's just purely about money. They would deny that but I haven't seen anything to suggest that it is not. And the decision is to grow and grow, and so because of the limitations in getting enough Australian based students they are looking still to growing overseas.

R OK. Economic? Ian, what do you think?

J The economic imperative is there, there is no doubt about it, because they talk about growth opportunities. Where do they see the university growing? WA as you know, population is about 2.2 million, there's four or five universities, very little movement or recruitment of students from other Australian states. European students are not likely to kind of provide any meaningful income or growth. Therefore from the point of view of growth is there for the business managers from the university. However there is an explicit as well as implicit but explicit objective and interest in Asian studies, in an academic interest in what's going on in the Asia Pacific and research wise there's an Asia research centre. They see the south east Asian region as very important geo politically and therefore they try to position ourselves in terms of the research skills, knowledge, degrees and expertise and therefore you can see the linkage of being a proper research university with the research connections with other universities and the students would actually be flowing in. The other explicit objective is that the university wants to internationalize its curriculum, its approach ethos and its brand position, if you like. So, there is more to money than, you know, more than just money. It's …there's a genuine direction – strategic, if you like – positioning towards south East Asia and making a name for ourselves to distinguish from WA and Curtin.

R OK, so you've got two different perspectives on that? Sarah you don't see that …..

S I don't

R thrust from Curtin?

S I think that there are certainly people that are involved with research universities there, but I don't really see that in terms of our school, or overall business. I think that it more about the financial issues.

R In terms of the international students who come here to Australia, what do you think are their motivations?

S It's actually … and this is politically incorrect..

R Good

S It seems to me that it depends on where they come from. So I can only say the ones I've met and the ones I interact with, but I believe that I find the Vietnamese, the Chinese from Malaysia and Singapore tend to be actually more interested in getting involved in the degree and working hard and trying to achieve, genuinely achieve. I find that the ones from PRC , I don't know what their original intention was, but in general their language skills are very very poor , even if they have supposedly passed the IELTS 6.5, it's just not realistic to say they are equipped to study, and they are often from the smaller cities in China and lacking confidence, they've never been out of China, so they stick together completely, because they've basically … you know it's too hard for them not to do that, in lots of ways. And I think that they quickly just try to develop some coping skills to at least scrape by. The Indians, not all of them but many of them are simply here to, as they call it, studying for a visa. And that's not all of them, and certainly not the home grown Indians. I don'.t mean that. But the ones that we get in and they are, I feel that they are generally more dedicated to getting marks by hook or by crook. The Vietnamese are always very hard working.

R Yes. But just coming back to the Chinese students, because they're the thrust of my study. Do you find they're PR, permanent residence driven, visa driven?

S Not necessarily, no. A lot of them just intend to stay. They don't want to. When I ask them, they say no, they'll go back, but I think that they feel, and it's probably true, that to get on in China they do need a degree. And sometimes they are quite wealthy and haven't done very well there, so their parents have sent to them to Australia. Because I think probably the good Chinese universities would be more rigorous than perhaps things are at the moment, given that if we failed everybody we should fail, there wouldn't be many people passing.

R That's interesting

S So I don't think it's necessarily so, no. I haven't come across so many of them that actually intend to stay.

R When you say your comment then if you passed those who should fail, do you have pressure from your university to pass international students?

S No, not not necessarily international but any. … It's the elephant in the room that probably 70% of the students are not up to it

R When you say 70%, is that domestic and international?

S Yes, yes, out of any group about 70-%. I've just got the overall results in, and it's incredibly mediocre. For my unit of 200, there would only be probably 4 people that actually got a high distinction, and maybe 20 that got a distinction, and there are some failures and there are some virtual failures and …have failed. But the problem is that it's not spoken about, nobody wants to admit it as in management, and so the staff become afraid and although they admit it among themselves, in public they will only say that, oh they're very rigorous in their assessments. And then I ask well how is I have third year students and they can't string a coherent sentence together, there's an embarrassed look and no discussion. It closes. So I think there is certainly a lot of pressure. We are judged by the student assessment, the feedback. We are judged by it, whether you like it or not, and in the end the staff are going to have to take care of their own living. That's basically what it's about. And also not to be pushed out or to….

R So you're evaluated on how the students evaluate you and so it's in your own interests, academics' interest, have to temper the rigour with the need to survive, essentially?

S Yes, yes. And they say that it's not the case, but you know the management will deny it, but it just isn't true. Because they actually give prizes for people who get …. There is one person for example in my school who always, even with larger cohorts, will get a rating of 95 from the students. Now anybody who gets 95 when they have a large cohort clearly has just tried to please the students. And admits in public to giving them the questions for the exam, the questions for the tests, etc. etc., and yet he will get more prizes next semester for this semester's efforts and it will go around and around. And everybody knows that is the case, but nothing is done.

R Ian, is that your experience? Would you like to talk about your experience?

J Um, yes, your first question, motives of overseas students for coming to (this university). I can talk more accurately about the MBA students. I think that they are interested in international exposure, they are interested in a nice generally generic MBA masters, and therefore the reason is not academic really. The reason is they perceive it as the passport. The essential qualification to get a very good job. That said, quite a few people see and it and use it. It's probably dual motivation or purpose of doing the MBA. They …if they do the MBA post-graduate studies they stand a better chance to get what they call PR or permanent residence, visa, and therefore it's the job. What it is is really, it's the …what stops them from getting good jobs , from staying in Australia is qualifications, and having all the right things to say to the immigration, to the relevant people. Otherwise I guess quite a few of them wouldn't do it. But, as I said, quite a few people don't rely on that. They do want the study, the degree in English, and they are interested in pursuing a better, more interesting career or change of career if you like.

R Can I come back to the question of language because Sarah you said 6.5 often their language skills, particular the mainland Chinese language skills aren't up to it. Ian you talk about job opportunities. One of the big barriers is language, yet we know universities set these levels 6.5 and yet students come through these pathways programs and can come with an IELTS 5 or a 5.5. So on the one hand that blocks their study, on the other it stops them from getting good jobs. Is that the sort of thing you are talking about?

J Yews it is. And it becomes apparent I the coursework, it becomes apparent in the presentations, it becomes apparent in the exam papers. They fail. I fail quite a few, which is a bit stressful of course because they pay something like $3000 per unit. So it is a massive investment and lost money opportunity. They how can I put, we figured it out that unless the university or universities take control of the admissions they will actually be in this invidious, and this negative and this horrible situation where students should not be admitted because students cannot cope with it or they can't perform. And therefore the university, my university studied taking control, at least in Singapore, of all the admissions, and in fact they propose quotas or numbers of entry. They are not going to have an open, if you like, open

slather without any upper limit or lower limit of students. They are not desperate. They are not going to go for these, greedy if you like, business model of the more the better, and raking.. It's a bit like a mining boom. It's an educational boom of all these different developing companies and therefore they're taking a much more cautious approach because they realize the costs of recruiting unsuitable students, too many too high, too pain.

R Sarah, I can see you reacting to what Yianna was saying in terms of the language aspects. Is there something that you wanted to add to that?

S Well yes, I mean we are told time and time again that we are not supposed to mark on English, but usually it's so bad that it becomes nonsensical, and then you are actually marking on that because it's impossible to guess what it is that they intended to say. So it is a problem, yes.

R Sorry, Ian?

J It's stressful because you want to do the right things as educationalists. You get to know the students and like them, so you want to do the right thing by them. You can't divorce your emotions and your feelings and your sympathy, but also you know that if you do start enforcing really good standards like you would do with the English speaking people, students, you will be up again a number of people who would not want to go through the rake-in if you like of the problem, identifying weaknesses, and the policy is actually how can we actually smooth it over, get it over in a nice way, covert way, not like Labor did of course. What they did with the AWU, whereby you know, the scandal of bribing Saddam Hussein ...ok it was exposed, but it was hush hush hush. They tried to get it out, and people never really paid any real penalties. So the university does similar things. I suppose it is partly cultural, and I am sure that they, you know, they are looking at the cost and benefits. And they probably don't care as much.

R OK, and just coming back then to … I'm staying with language because it's such a big issue. I mean, what sort of import does it have on you as academics when you are trying to teach a mixed cohort of domestic students, who speak English well, even though they may not always write well, and international students who perhaps have got marginal English. I mean, how do you juggle that sort of cohort to make your teaching worthwhile?

S Oh, That's really a hard one but in the end I do take the view to advise the people that are just not getting it. So for example, all the lectures are recorded so they can listen to them on i-lecture afterwards, that's one thing they can do to help themselves. If they approach me and say that they didn't understand too much, will I explain it to them separately, but then I will also suggest to them that they take advantage of the English classes and the learning skills classes etc. that are available, and you know it's …actually I do tell them that I speak two other languages myself but I would have to work a lot harder if I went to a university in the country of either of those, than people who have been born and brought up through the school system. And so I try to diplomatically make them understand that it's also their responsibility because there is actually help available to do something about it.

R I suppose, if you are standing up there at a lectern and you have a lecture to deliver on, I don't know, consumer behaviour, to a cohort of 200, and you are looking down there and 80 of those students are from …speak languages other than English. How do you deliver that lecture in a meaningful way?

S Well what I usually do is adapt. I will use words with more than two syllables, but then I will say the word in a simple way so that you are acting like a dictionary at the same time. So I will do it that way. But I feel as though again it's the same situation, that they've actually got to try to keep up. Because we are lecturing in English. English is the medium and that's it. So I will try to adjust to help them but I can't make it too you know, basic, or childish to cater either. There's a limit to how low I will go. laughs

R OK I'll come to that because I'll put some of these things to you at the end of the interview that I've had from students and other interviewees. I guess, do you think then that the international students get special consideration in terms of their language?

R Ian's nodding. Yes?

S Yes, yes I do. Yeah. I think people are forced into that because it comes back to the same situation. I mean…. but having said that, I had an interesting experience with um….we have a master's degree and the students can as an elective do a research project which means that they have to conduct the research and write it up as well, under supervision. And I supervised an Australian born student from an Anglo background and a Chinese guy from PRC and I was amazed at how appalling things like the woman's from the Anglo background, punctuation, spelling and it was incredible. I was really shocked. And the difference was interesting, because the guy from China, he couldn't actually … first of all he was very nervous and he didn't have the high expectations of doing very well and he actually admitted that to me straight away, so I was glad that he felt comfortable to say this. So I talked to him and I said to him, 'your English isn't very good is it?' and he said 'no'. So I said to him, 'right, so here's what we do. You've just got to do exactly what I tell you and you do that, and I can help you get through it, but you must do *everything* that I tell you and exactly what I tell you, or otherwise you know, you don't stand a chance, frankly.' So he said, 'okay'.

J 'thank you'.

R thank you…. (acknowledging Ian's comment).

S So he said 'thank you'. And I'd say to him, 'right, go and find five. articles about this … whatever. I gave him a topic, I helped him to set up focus groups, helped him to develop his focus group guide, but I left him to actually do that by himself and he actually in the end did a better and more thorough literature review from his own efforts than the other one did. Because he discussed things, I pointed out what was wrong; I didn't correct him, every page of English. I would correct a paragraph and said right, now you do the rest and these are the things you've got to look for. And because he put a lot of effort into it, he actually did rather well considering, you know. I'm thinking 'My God this is going to be a terrible headache'. And he did take quite a bit of my time but you know that's fine because he actually put a lot of work into it and did well out of it.

R OK so that's one student. Laughing ….. How do you manage though? How many students are we talking about?

S Well for those research projects it's just a couple of students and it's at the master's level. If we're talking about undergrads, you're talking about probably 200 students in the cohort and probably at any time, you know, towards a hundred will be non-English background...

R Ian how do you manage? And what do you think is a reasonable level of support?

J Looks that's a difficult question really. A really difficult issue. A difficult answer. I don't have a good answer. If I can take one step by back, say impact of overseas students on my teaching. Well the truth is that I find myself consciously and unconsciously slowing down when I don't see that I am understood or I don't kind of you know get the right expressions or responses. My exposition changes, my rhythm changes. Sometimes it puts me off. Sometimes it slows down to pretty basic, like high school if you like, where I have to take care of them and lift them and take it step by step. It affects everything. Not only just my mood I think and my kind of flow, if there is such a thing as flow. But affects other students too. Not just me really. You can imagine the whole atmosphere. You know that from your experience of course. So slowing down is one. I adapt my slides to get more visuals, to make the points clearer and provide illustrations because I realize that language is more than just words or reading…they need to understand the whole if you like fabric of the business environment. The cultural environment, the expressions, what's perceived to be right or wrong. New, old. And then the style of doing things. It affects...it connects with…..my teaching is connecting and underpinned by the assessment strategy, whereby I deliberately have a range of assessments including multiple choice tests, because I want them to read, I want to find a good way to encourage them, force them….force them is a wrong word, to kind of give them some incentive to read what I teach so that they follow through. I do case studies, I do practical things, discussions, I do group projects and you can see that the overseas students will actually club together amongst themselves usually. The Anglo speakers, the Anglophones will avoid them because they don't want to lose marks.

R. Do you see you have a role there in making those groups mix?

J I do, and I don't. If somebody says to me 'I want to get a distinction and I want to work with these people, I don't want to work with somebody who cannot speak English, I do not impose. I don't see that is ethical or educationally effective. And also the other thing I make clear is that they are responsible for the learning. They're adults. And they decided, they signed up for the unit. I didn't force them, they didn't have to do it. They volunteered. And these are the standards frankly. You know? Not take it or leave. And I am going to go through and deliver a good educational experience training, but I am not going to dilute it and simply go down the lowest or the slowest student's level. I don't do that.

S Can I just say something there, because you see I always feel that I can understand the other students' viewpoint. And I think all of the students have paid to be there, they've all got their goals in mind, so I don't actually see it as the responsibility of the native English speaker

J (interjects) to shelter

S (continues) to help to educate the others to learn English. And you know that is the problem. I just don't think it's their responsibility. And they don't want to do it. And they certainly would react very very badly if they were forced.

J The other thing Robyn to bear in mind, and I do make that clear, is that I ask them the question, if there are some French or Portuguese or Brazilians or Germans or Chinese, I said to them, if I came to your country and I spoke the same level as you do either German or Mandarin or Portuguese, what do you think would be my chances to study at a university, especially for graduate studies and invariable I get different responses. Some of them get shy, embarrassed. Some of them laugh it off and say 'you wouldn't get anywhere', so they know that we actually bend the rules and we allow, we are very easy on them than the Anglophones, and …so it's a matter of balance. I try to really … it's hard….I try to do as best as I can but I don't go to the lowest denominator and I don't try to penalize the high flying ones either.

R It's an interesting question, and it's an interesting response, because one of the things that's come consistently from (aside … as cat comes on to screen….you have a visitor. He must have heard my voice). The language advisers I've spoken to are all very very strident when they're saying discipline academics don't pick up the load with language development, and it's their responsibility. Every one of them. It's been a very strident comment from every one of them.

J I think that's a dangerous and false argument because my duties, my expertise are in marketing strategy, therefore number one, I can talk about marketing and and develop their skills in marketing strategy. Number One. Number two, the strong argument which is contradictory to what the others say, is that at postgraduate level I expect people to really be competent, not only conceptually, not only expressing in writing, but to be as good as, anybody else, in order to fully benefit from that. So I think that's a cop-out, they're passing the bag, they're passing the problem child if you like to other people. That's not … the job at postgraduate level is to develop the highest level of critical thinking. And if that's the criterion, you know, the underpinning, the baseline, the ??? is that somebody should be able to express, to read, to write really fluently, no ifs no buts. That's basically the bottom line. And if they don't want to accept that, then they're kidding themselves and they're passing the buck and they are actually hiding other problems.

S Are you saying Robyn that they're suggesting that the language skills people are actually suggesting that we don't have a problem because they're the ones that have got a problem, not us?

R No, no they're acknowledging the problem but they're saying it's not just their issue to deal with it. That language development needs to be occurring in the faculties as well as with the specialist language advisers. And they say it's each academic's…..this has been a consistent theme – that's it's each academic's responsibility to, because they have such large cohorts of international students, to not just look after the content but to look after the language as well.

S Yeah. Well you see that's a problem because it would be such a huge job that you can't necessarily …..I mean it would just be too difficult to take it on.

I mean, like you said, I would correct a paragraph, but then I expect them to …… I mean, most of them don't even know things like select all and use spelling, grammar, again, grammar and spellcheck to actually…... I mean that would improve a lot. They don't even do that much. Even if you tell them, they still don't do it. So it's kind of very very frustrating. And the other aspect is, that people are not even admitting is that I'm of a firm belief that these people have actually paid an agent or somebody to actually get a certificate to say they've got 6.5 and they're probably never ever taken the actual test. That might be cynical but I suspect that in a lot of places. And sometimes they have genuinely done it though, and they arrive believing that their English is going to be good enough. They just don't know that it's not, until they get here.

J Robyn there's another issue. The question is when Australian students – from Perth, South Perth, North Perth, Central Perth – they come to my classes and I find out that they don't speak English. Do I teach them English, or do I teach them Marketing? There's an implicit assumption that is somebody studies in an English language degree, they can speak the language. If I go to China, to Beijing, and I want to study something, my own basic assumption and expectation would be that I can speak the language. I mean, it's just nonsensical. I mean, it's like saying I want to start doing work, but I cannot walk and I cannot handle a tool, and I cannot sort of get there, please help me because I want a job. And hello??

R Fair point

J It's dangerous.

R My next question was, is whether there's room in a typical academic's week to take on extra responsibilities for language development.

J I'm not an expert in teaching English language.

R Well that's another point but also the other thing is that, no there isn't. Because where would you start and where would you end? It would be an enormous task. Maybe the schools at the university that are involved in international students should have their own English teachers there offering classes, particularly focusing on the particular language for the subjects that the students are studying, but then again most of them don't want to spend the money. That's the reality.

R My University has a compulsory subject for all non-English speaking background students, and it's done as a credit subject in first semester, and they learn the language of the discipline. Now it's broad language. For example if you think about business being accounting and marketing and all those ancillary things, but it's an attempt, at least. Do you think that's a solution, do you think.

S I think it's a good start. But yes, and I think I've often said that I believe something like that, they could spend an extra semester doing things like that. English, learning skills, cultural issues, but you see the problem is, which university is going to be the only one to do it because they won't, because the students won't come then because of the money situation, so you get back to that situation. But I actually think that would benefit them enormously. And yes of course to understand the culture takes more than a semester, but to give them the basics, so they've something to work with.

J There's another issue Robyn. First of all the job description for the lecturer, for a public university lecturer is to teach, and do tutorials and to assess them, and you expect students like all the other Australian students, to have reached a certain standard. And over here, if you are critical about what happening with overseas students, they dropped the standards of language, in admissions, and they just looked the other way around, and they just tried to pass the problem on to everyone else, unsuspecting lecturers who are supposed to be or expect to be like private tutors or personal tutors, which is over and above their job description and expectations so really, they're pushing the boundaries if you like of the job description and the job performance or the duties of the lecturers number one.

S Already

J Already. So that's been a dirty dirty really you know, tactic, strategy, in just about the vast majority of the universities in the Anglophone world including England actually. Number one. Number 2, let's think of it for a second. If I as a foreigner, let's pretend I'm a Chinese graduate. I've done my PhD, I've done everything and I want to teach in an Anglophone country like Australia. Now it would be my duty to familisarise myself as much as possible about the teaching environment in Australia, the standards, the expectations, the language, in order for me to perform really well. Now, most of these students, especially you know the overseas students, Chinese for example even more in some ways, because of the political, cultural background, and differences in terms of non-commercial, non-market economy, they come here to study Business Studies, and there are totally blind to the obvious things of the business environment, the culture, the life. What is going on when the so called empirical, tangible day to day world of retail, brands, pricing, promotions whatever, and it's just an impossible task. It's a bit like me trying to come to China, be a designer for the Chinese people, but I know nothing about the culture, nothing about their designs, nothing about their art, nothing about their values, and history. And here I am trying to sell myself as an artist who is going to satisfy Chinese tastes. It's nonsense. We are just selling very cheaply, very low. We do a disservice. We dropped all the standards they used to have, in order for the money. And there they find those excuses to blame others basically. That's the game really. Blame the lecturers who are supposed to be experts and good researchers in consumer behavior, in strategic thinking, in decision making and accounting, and by the way they should be English language teachers, and by the way they should have cultural awareness of how the Chinese and the Indian students think and like to go, what their background is, and help them to pass and become brilliant students. Nonsense.

R Yes…laughs… (a bit taken aback). It brings me to one ancillary question. Are academics in your experience given any sort of professional development for want of a better word, to introduce their students in to a better education paradigm? I mean, is this something you're helped to do. I mean, as international student numbers have grown, has there been any recognition that academics needed any professional development to help them cope with that changed student cohort?

S No, when I first joined this university I went to one, it was supposed to be a morning seminar about exactly those issues to help people when they were travelling to the overseas, to the offshore location, and we just played stupid games. They didn't actually touch on, at all, on the major issues. Again, it was all so PC that nobody wanted to, you know, nobody could get to anything meaningful. And I have to say, that having worked at several universities, I actually don't think it's any different from the majority.

R Yeah? OK. Ian?

J I mean this is a really fundamental question really. How to you bridge this major differences and the huge gaps in terms of our knowledge as academics, cultural knowledge, educational knowledge, attitude what they went through, what they know, what they don't know. Basically we try to move them from what they know to what they don't know the new things. Is that right? As teachers?

R Yes

J That's the objective in a simplistic way. We have an idea what the Australians, or what the Anglophones are going through, personal experience I suppose. I don't have any personal experience in studying or knowing the Chinese culture for example. Would I benefit if I knew that? Absolutely yes. Would I have changed my teaching? Yes I would. How can I do it? You know, by osmosis? No I can't. Do they provide proper training, something like two or three years of secondment or placing academics overseas or bringing other academics over here, to show and teach and showcase what's going on. No they don't. Why do they not do that? It's investment, it's resources, money. Time, with the pressure. What's the quick and dirty way to do it? Just pack them in, you know, tell them all sorts of nice things, you know put pressure on the academics, blame the academics about that. All the admin people sitting behind little kind of you know boards and fences and kind of clichés. You know, job descriptions. 'It's not me job to do that.' They pay lots of, there's a whole industry of these kinds of admissions,

recruitment agencies that have sprung up because of this opportunistic and commercial if you like educational industry they've created. Is it education? Well no, education is not an industry. Education is about developing people. And developing people, who've got to have ethics and honesty, and you've got to do it really well, and you …it's not cheap. If it was cheap, why do the bloody Oxford and Cambridge, they still have tutorials whereby they have small numbers of people, anything up to seven people, which I can handle. You can handle, and who can actually relate to them on a one to one basis, because this is how people learn. They don't learn through machines, they don't learn in groups. This is not a factory. I mean we've adapted the Fordism, the factory, the mass production, industrial production, processes to education and we claim that we've got an industry that is second to what is it? Tourism or mining or something like that. And you think, that is cruel, mercenary and it's purely commercial.

R There's a philosophical clash?

J It's more than philosophical clash. I think it's to do with ethics, primarily, i.e. what is education? If somebody defines education, the expectation and the outcomes and what is delivered, what we do, what most of the universities do is unethical. It's unethical, and they've been pushed there and the government knows that. The government actually says …and now, as you know, they've cut one or two percent from whatever savings. And you know whatever kind of gibberish they put forward. They say, earn more money because the government is not going to pay more to public universities. So what do we do? We are forced to actually find all sorts of expedient ways in order to balance the books and make survive, and make it a goal and something goes. There is a price to pay. And the fact is most of these Chinese and Indians know that if they complain, what you were saying earlier on, nine out of ten if they actually go to appeals they will win, because most of the universities I know don't want to sort of expose themselves into a bigger if you like, public relations embarrassing stories coming out.

So they are looking after their public image and their persona number one. Number two, do they really want to lose out…they get greedy. Do they really want to lose out on the overseas students, kind of you know, um. It's a bit like a frenzy. It's a bit like the gold rush. You can see the greed factor coming out from the cultural software of this nation…any nation frankly. So there's a combination between the greed, ethical and the people who actually just say, well, let's really provide quality university that does stand out, and also let's practice the simple thing. Do unto others as you would like them to do to you. Would I send my kids to a university that does these things? No. And most of the academics do not send their kids to non-G8 universities. It's …they're voting with their feet. They're keeping quiet. They play the game. It's all of a kind of a charade that protects the jobs, it's an industry, it brings money, it brings foreign exchange, everybody knows that, including Julia Gillard, including Kevin Rudd, including Abbot, including everyone. They're not idiots. They see exactly what's going on, but they say 'oh well, if it's not broken… you know, keep going.'

R That's very powerful.. very powerful indeed. I understand exactly what you're saying. Look, I'll just come back to a final number of questions. And you've answered some of it very thoroughly already, so if you've feel that you've done that, let's just skip on. I'm mindful of your time.

One question I had but I think you've answered it very well is that many of the discipline academics I've spoken to say development of international l education has considerably impacted both their workload and the way they teach. Now we've talked about that, but is there anything you'd like to add to that?

S No, I think it's …um…yeah.

R OK. I'll put some specifics …

J Somehow it devalues your job.

S That's true.

J it actually affects your self-dignity, your self-worth, your self-credibility. You come home and you say, 'well did I actually do the right thing.' No. Do I have any one option? No. Because if I stand up and say to my Dean, 'you know, one third of my class should not be

there.'[He would say, 'maybe you should take a pay cut Ian.' Or maybe we should reduce your conference allowance. Or maybe we should cut out the funding for research. And maybe we should teach 90% not 70 or 60 per cent. So make a choice. So you feel degraded. You feel you are being pushed, and they define you. I cannot define myself to take a really good quality stance, as an academic, as an educationalist, and therefore my quality, satisfaction of job, satisfaction of life is eroded. We are becoming almost like, not quite as negative as second hand car dealers, but there's a bit of that creeping up on you. You know damn well even the students don't respect what we do. Because we don't enforce the standards.

R Yep, right. OK, that's a good additional comment. I'm going to put some of the other comments that I've extracted from some of the other interviews.

From another discipline academic. 'There are too many students wanting additional help. I don't have time to consult with all of them.'

S True.

R True?

J You cannot. You cannot, because what you said earlier on about, you know, you have your targets for publishing, you have your timetable. You have your diary every day and you look at every single hour with a hawk eye to see, 'how can I squeeze and do my job without being either a workaholic and have no life basically, you know, or to really run ragged and run around, and therefore you make difficult decisions. You have to think like a consultant, like a paid lawyer whereby you say, 'where is my highest income, profit, revenue if you like kind of in a stream coming from. Research, or teaching, or looking after the students, and having consultation. Consultation for what? So this is where the compromise comes in and this is where your self-respect gets a bit of a knock. This is where you feel you are not as good as you should have been on this and that, so you mark yourself down.

R Because you're constantly doing that juggle and compromise. A second question – you've both answered this but there may be something you want to add. A direct quote from a discipline academic. 'I have had little guidance from my university to help me to teach students from other cultures.'

S Yeah, well, that's absolutely true. There's nothing done whatsoever. And it's interesting because I'd say in our case because we both are from different backgrounds, we love travelling, we speak other languages, we are probably better equipped…not that we necessarily understand the cultures that our students are from, but at least we do have the interest and curiosity. I have found there are several academics who don't, and take a very strident attitude to well, you know, that's not my problem. Yes, you can argue as we've said that it shouldn't be, but it becomes your problem and there is certainly no support or anything to actually get people to even to be more open to considering other people's viewpoints. I think it would be wrong to assume that all academics are very worldly, or sophisticated in that sense. They're not.

R OK thank you. Another direct quote ….

J Can I say something?

R Please.

J If you look at the guide that the university has done and resources, the answer is nothing and therefore you ask the question, 'is there any other sector that can be looked at, compared, benchmarked against this issue of how do they deal with overseas relationships or customers or people, or know, collaborators, and the answer is, most of the serious investment firms, advertising companies, mining companies, investment manufacturing companies, what do they do? They send their workers, their people, their staff overseas, or they invite people to talk about culture or differences. They have offices, they have specific training. There is a cross fertilization. I mean, this is where the education sector is really shambolic. It's just one of these pathetic things, you know, you know what I mean. We are in the business of training people, we are in the business of development really high levels of skills and talent, and therefore, and we do none of that when it comes to overseas students. We're dealing with overseas you know, cohort, and yet other companies that deal with cars, or with mining, or with iron ore or oil or petroleum or shipping, what do they do? They teach

them languages, they take them overseas to Singapore, or China or Japan, or wherever the business partner is, and, they invest in people. And I keep on thinking, this is where the shoddy business comes in, where the universities fail abysmally. As corporations, as organisations. It's just a crying shame really that they did not invest in the academics in order to deliver some really top quality for these students. What they done is sat and just raked in as much as possible from the students, and they spend nothing.

R Alright. Difficult. Another direct quote from an academic. 'Plagiarism and cheating are endemic and we don't seem to be able to stop it.'

S Well that's the other problem of course. Actually if you are going to do it property, it takes literally hours. You have a largish report let's say, and you actually have to put up a plagiarism case, and it takes hours and hours and hours. Stopping it is very difficult. And the problem is, again, the students are supported. They will make excuses for them. So you can spend hours and hours filling out these ridiculous pages, for things to go through committees etc. to prove the case, and then they'll just say, 'oh well it's a misunderstanding. They didn't quite get it.' So you know, we have to do those things, but what's the point?

R OK, another quote. "I don't engage with students in the same way and this is an impact on domestic students. I don't talk off the cuff any more. I don't use jokes and colloquialisms.'

S I do, and it probably goes over some people's heads but I just think again, I can't penalize the people who actually do want to understand things properly. So for example in my classes I will show videos and stuff like that to demonstrate the theory, but I will also talk about personal past experiences. That might include some jokes. And I just feel, I am sorry, I cannot ….it's impossible to cater equally for everybody who's in the room. So I do my bit as I said by explaining long words and complex things, but at the same time you know, you just have to accept that's the reality. They won't get it.

R Ian?

J Well I find that I can reduce…I don't use jokes…or less. I find that I change my language, the way I express myself, the stories I tell, which makes it more stilted, makes it more constrained, it makes it more stiff, and less colour, less flexibility, it becomes more simple. I even had comments from students who say, 'are you going to stick to the PowerPoint presentation and the chapter as is in the book.' And I've said it. I find that offensive, because this is not a high school level, number one. Number two, I want to use my own personal experience from work, from consultancy, from research, from other things. I want to enrich this material, number one. Number two, I want you to actually get used to, you don't learn from one book, the Koran or the Bible, this sort of simplistic Bible-bashing kind of thing. You know open up and see the diversity of views. And I find it constraining and restricting and stifling. You know I can't breathe. And what you are asking me to do, is in fact dangerous. And when it comes to plagiarism, we say yes, there is a problem here, and hardly anybody wants to do really ask the hard question. Why do these students plagiarize so much? They cannot write in their own words, or interpret or kind of discuss anything. And the answer boils down to, they shouldn't be there.

R They shouldn't be there.

J Be there. The admissions people failed, they got if you like…..you know, it's a bit like….it sounds like a really horrible thing but you have sort of a faulty product or a dodgy car made on a Friday afternoon when just about all the people at British Leyland you know in the factory there, they are kind of knocking off and they don't pay attention to their details. But, they are not going to say that to the customers, unsuspecting customers, they're just going to pass it on. Slip it on. It's exactly the same unethical approach in universities, whereby they don't want to face the reality of why, what is the cause. What is the reason for the students not knowing how to read, how to write a proper essay? Because they cannot speak English. They haven't done any proper work or they haven't got the skills and so on and so on. So that's what it's all about. And then they blame, they push it up, or further down the value chain if you like. You know, the academics.

R Another direct quote, which we have already addressed but you may want to add to. "I feel under pressure to pass international students. The pressure comes from the students and also the faculty".

S Yep, that's actually true. Because you know the problem is of course that if these students all start failing, or if we fail people as we should really, it's going to cut down on the market, because there's always somewhere else that will take them. For example there are so called international campuses of places like CQU which is disgraceful, in Melbourne, where they're all entirely foreign students and the standards…. I worked there for a semester, so I do know… are so abysmal that it just makes you shudder. But the students can go there. There's always somewhere for them to go. They're going to lose business. That's what it's about.

J There's a major structural issue here, a problem really, is that somehow the university or the government they went down the line of rewarding completion rates without asking the question, you know, how and whether they are good completions, genuine completions. And therefore you get penalized, universities get penalized if you have attrition, high attrition rates, or failure rates, and yes, these students put pressure because they pay a lot of money and you can tell that they are not the richest students that we get, like Harvard or Oxford, whatever, Cambridge. But the poorer students come to our universities. And the faculty, there is a peer pressure because nine out of ten, they will have this kind of unscientific norms, you know the bell shaped standard deviations in the pass rate, success rates, high distinctions and failures or whatever, and therefore you would look weird, feel awkward, feel the pressure, something wrong, people start to ask you a question about your teaching if you fail too many students. You will have lots and lots of problems and time wasting and stress and pressure and agro and you're not going to get any thanks from anybody about ….and I've had somebody, at Latrobe, I can tell you that, the actual Dean behind my back, the student failed the exam. He asked me to double mark it blindly by somebody else outside the faculty. We did that. The mark came lower than mine. The Dean, behind my back, he changed the mark and passed the student.

R Oooohhh….dear

S That's happened on more than one occasion. So this is where there is absolutely no incentive as an academic to do the right thing. Then that is what makes you feel actually really bad with yourself. Demoralised, actually.

J They undermine your sense of … am I qualified, quality, professional, competent to make a decision and stand by my decision, the process that I followed, the double marking, and therefore I can actually, you know, be proud of what I do. And be *credible*. You know in the eyes of the students, not only be seen but do it and explain it, you know all the criteria, and yet you have these unscrupulous, you know, managers, or deans or heads of school, whereby they say 'you know what, we have to have to you know find a good way to avoid trouble.' ….And then sometimes they even encourage students to complain about 'I don't like your attitude'. Not the mark, I don't like your attitude. You know the lecturer is under pressure because he or she made them, upset them, or they cried, so you have to have somebody else in the office just to actually just protect yourself. And you think, that's not what I signed up for as an academic. And you know I'm proud to do a good job. And a trust, and I'm happy to be accountable and … but I don't want people to actually play dirty games on me.

R Two more quick questions, and then we're just about done. Another direct quote. 'The program has been dumbed down to enable international students to pass.'

S That's true, but I think also …well, the standards, we've noticed the standards in the Australian students also has dropped over the years and can only put that down to a lot of pressure being put on schools to perform. We've heard from somebody within the Department of Education told us that, and we think that overall we've had to dumb down, but it gets worse when you are talking about somebody who can't speak English at all. So yes, that's all true.

J There's another insidious thing that people probably don't mention or don't realise … within that environment, within that phenomenon that we have so many students that shouldn't be there basically, shouldn't be in an Anglophone university, is that you feel the

pressure, implicit pressure to pass and implicit pressure not to be the outlier. Not to stand out because there are penalties, there are or problems, you know, that is not the smart thing to do.

S Yes, yes.

J But the insidious thing is that there is an implicit culture and a norm established in every department whereby you figure out what you have to do, you know, to be okay,

S to survive

J To survive, and you look around you, you check who does what, you hear comments, you try to integrate and synthesise and say 'what do other staff do? What do other people say and do? What's the advice? What do the students do? What's the feedback? Where do I want to be here?' And therefore you adjust, and you adapt and you morph into something different.

R Mmm, yes, yes. OK, look I think the other one we've covered too. "I've had to change the assessment of the subjects I teach to help international students pass.'

S Well it's really about lowering of the standards and letting things go that… rather than change the assessment. It's just actually lowering the standard we're looking at really…. that you would like to apply. Mmmm. If you were doing it properly.

J But also you find yourself sometimes probably unconsciously up to a point that you make allowances for the overseas students. And the assumption, or the received wisdom, is that they understand, very commonly understand, is that they know the subject, but they cannot express it. You think….

S How do you know that? You have no evidence. That's the problem.

J That's just an assumption. Just a hypothesis.

S Exactly.

J And therefore you find yourself, kind of, being a bit generous. But, you're careful basically. Because you don't want to make a mistake. You don't want to ….frankly, you don't want to you know, it's like a doctor really. You don't want to do any harm. So quite often you err on the kind of, you know, positive side.

R Can I ask you? Do you get feedback from the domestic students about how they find their classes and how they find working with so many international students? Does that ever come up?

S Oh Yes. They don't usually like it and they basically , the one thing is that in lectures it doesn't matter so much, there's still some interaction, but obviously it's each student's responsibility to keep up, and for the lecturer to adjust obviously at the same time. But if you are talking about the tutorials, where it's obviously meant to be interactive, a lot of the local students actually stop contributing and taking part as much as they would because they feel self-conscious and it also starts to irritate them that half of the room or more is just sitting there and actually refuse if you even try to encourage them and to get them to be included and support them within that, they will often just refuse to actually open their mouths. So for what reasons, they could be mixed. It might be they're embarrassed about their English, it might be that they don't know what they're talking about and they know that. There could be a whole variety of reasons, and so often the local students will stop participating because they just feel irritated by it all, and uncomfortable to be the only person that's talking the whole time.

J There's another issue Robyn, not only tutorials whereby the students find they cannot have discussions so therefore their answer is avoidance. They don't express negativities immediately but they simply just walk off and they don't turn up and they don't participate and they don't find it useful. And therefore they don't get anything out of it. But the other thing is that I found students who if they see, when they see that that there is a third, a fourth, a quarter, that over a quarter of students (are from) overseas and the classroom discussions are not fantastic, the group work and the group interaction is not fantastic, in fact is negative, they perceive the whole course is of a lower quality.

S It's boring

J The quality. In fact one or two of them changed you know from the MBA that I run, that we run, to go somewhere else because of that reason. So really, it's there so it seems as though the penalties if you …because they've admitted, they entered low, unsuitable students into the course here, they have affected dramatically the lecturers and the students, and nobody has done a study to actually estimate the costs to their teaching staff, to their careers, to their quality of life and quality of work, and actually the experience of the domestic students. Nobody talks about that. In fact, they avoid it.
R That's very true.
J What can they do? You know? They just keep quiet and they run quickly and they go back to their favourite subjects, you know, they're clever, they just need a bit more help. Come on. This is university. This is not a personal, private tutorial, personal tutoring or lecturing in a private university, or in a private school if you like. This is a public university.
R I would like to just finish off, and as I said I'm conscious of your time and we've talked for well over the hour already, but any final thoughts or comments. Is there anything beneficial? We've talked about a lot of the negativity associated with international education. So maybe now, is there anything you want to say that's …you see benefit from it. The other thing too I would ask you, are there any anecdotes of individual interactions you've had with international students which have been particularly positive or negative or have shocked you. With all of your experience, have been out of the ordinary.
S I would say I've had some positive ones. But these are people that they've not from PRC unfortunately but apart from that guy I mentioned to you, he is. But I've had them when they have taken the time to come and talk and discuss their problems and really work hard and then do extremely well, so that's genuinely very satisfying when that happens. But I think generally one of the problems is they won't seek the help that they should, either. There's an assumption they will come and no matter how many times you tell them to ask questions or come and see you they don't, and I think that's another thing. And I don't really know, but I assume it might be about loss of face, not coping and not being seen to cope in front of their peers.
R One of my students said to me that they can't ask the questions because their language isn't good enough to frame the questions. He was talking about some of his fellow Chinese students.
S Well yes that would be true. But they won't even come and do it in a private consultation time which we have to give 4 hours a week for example for that, where I am. But they don't even do it then, so there's some other barrier to that, whatever it is, but it's difficult. And again, I've found, and it sounds like an awful thing to say but in my experience this is true, that the Indian students from India will do absolutely anything, and I've had this happen with many over time, so I'm not just talking about one incident that's put me off, but will try *anything* and will tell lies about their own situation, about whether it's a Hindu festival and that's why they were away, that's one. And what they were doing, why they've done badly, they will try anything, and constantly a long long time. They will not be put off easily from trying it on. And particularly, they are particularly like that and I am afraid that that has now made me cynical, although I do check myself because obviously I mustn't assume that everybody is the same. But it has made me cynical to the Indian students. Because I've had so many experiences, far more than one where they try it on. So that's a pity but that's just what happened, and I do actually assume that is probably from a cultural perspective. That's probably what they have to do to get by in life there, if they are of the wrong caste.
R Quite possibly. I've had it too…a student presenting and saying 'I want a 7' and then in the face of very sub-standard work, maintaining his right to a 7.
S Yes, yes exactly.
R OK, so let's finish there unless there are things that you would like to talk about.
J There's one issue that I don't know if it comes into your research …one of the out camps overall from this strategy of importing, you know, admitting lower o u unsuitable students to higher education is the individual reputation of the university goes down. For example I'm aware that in Singapore quite a few students don't think highly of my university or

a few other universities and I went there, and therefore they begin to see their own universities and their own standards much better than ours. And it seems to me that slowly slowly there's a danger, and if you see it as a phenomenon, that the reputation of Murdoch, or Curtin, or Monash in Singapore is negative, it's lower. Students know they can get the exam papers, they can actually pass without speaking English and they can use it and abuse it. Just about all the English universities, British universities, they have so called distance delivery and local providers in Singapore and people get degrees like I did rom Strathclyde, from Reading University, and they never step a foot in the UK, and yet, in their CV, they say, 'I've got a masters from there.' No thesis, no nothing at all. But they have no idea what the standards are. And therefore the reputation of not only British universities but Australia educational sector as a group is going down, is negative, and when I hear students reaction when I say, 'would I be able to study in your country with the same level of language as your English' and they laugh. I keep on thinking, we are sleepwalking. We are selling…the most important thing, the brand. And then the Japanese with the Lexus and the better quality cars, and based on photographing the other cars the Volkswagen, they copy them and they go back and do better, they laugh at us and say, 'well you guys, you don't know how to build anything'. 'Yu don't know how to do it. It's not good enough.' So it seems to me there's a danger that the education sector could become second rate if you like, and a kind of car …

S Used car salesman

J Used car salesman, and we don't have anything good enough to sell and impress them. And you can see that. They've invested a heck of lot of money in Hong Kong. And they've got the Hong Kong University of Sciences is one of the top in 25 years, China is investing hugely, Malaysia is investing hugely, Singapore wants to become an education hub in south east Asia. They've got in ….they've got Yale, they've got lots of other universities – Stanford there, and I think we are just selling the farm, as well as the cows, as well as the land, and we think we are doing very well, basically.

R What's the answer?

J Ah, stick to quality.

S Small, and quality.

J First of all, do not lie to them or to us or to anybody else that the students we meet, they're genuinely are as good as our domestic students. Full stop. And if we have that, if we have that, the message will come across and they will know it's growth, small incremental genuine quality and don't be greedy. Don't be greedy.

S And I think what you just said also. It's got financial implications that nobody's looked at. There are economic implications to all of that nobody considers. And loss of reputation, as you know which is going to be very difficult to regain or reposition. And it's all very short term. And that's what really bothers me because it's far too short term and really we have huge numbers of students where I am, and the running costs of that are huge. They could easily contract and reduce running costs and that would be a saving, and put quality in instead of endless quantity of 'pile it high sell it cheap' and not actually get very much out of it in the end either. So I think they could do it a lot better with contracting a bit.

J Robyn, a controversial point of view, right? A suggestion. If you look at the car industry in the UK, they started everything. They were the number one way back in the fifties and sixties. Look at them now. Have they got anything? Nothing. Why? They never invested in quality. What did the Germans do? They stuck it out, doggedly, quality, quality, quality.

S And the Japanese.

J And the Japanese. And it seems to me the Colonial grab, slash, quick profit, the City of London attitude, it's here, it's part of the culture, it's part of the mindset, which is based on no hard work, take it easy mate, don't kill yourself. You see the new immigrants working hard, even the Labor Party wanted to exclude them. They won't employ them where-ever they work.

S A long time back

J Yeah, a long time, but the software is there. From the parents, from the mums and dads to the children and the grandchildren. It's passed on.

S So you've got too many British characteristics here, that's what he's saying. Laughing.
R Well it's a pretty basic marketing concept isn't it, about quality?
S Yes exactly.
J Well exactly. And you cannot separate what we do in education from what we do in mining, what we do in agriculture, what we do in politics, what we do in whatever, you know, manufacturing. It's the same in cultural values and attitudes, whereby we don't do what the Germans do, we don't do what the Japanese do, we just do what the old colonial Brits, raping, pillaging, kind of you know, stealing. Then, oh, oops, you know, the boom is gone. And the mining .. you know, we're selling everything. We're doing nothing, frankly, like any other third world country, like any other banana republic, and we think, 'oh my God, we don't have an economy' and everything else is going to be, you know, going down to pot.
S You need to run for Parliament
J So I mean,
R We're looking for a leader
J It doesn't take a PhD to figure it out, really.
R OK, I'm going to turn my recorder off now unless there's anything else?
S No that's it. That's good, thank you.
J Thank you
S I'll turn the recorder off.

Transcript, Professor Simon, … University

R Professor thank you very much for speaking with me this morning and for helping me with my research for my PhD.

S It's a pleasure.

R Can I start just in terms of my questioning, I have some questions grouped and I'll flag those as I move forward, but we start with just some general information about some student issues. What percentage of your student cohort are international students.

S Yes, we, ah, the percentage is about 22%

R 22?

S Yeah, of the total student enrolments at your university. So total enrolments about, it's about 2,400 and international students about 4,500.

R What percentage of those international students are Chinese?

S Yes, a good question, and equal to about 20%, so 800. We talk about total enrolments. Each semester we looking at about 300 new commencements.

R Alright. How does you market itself to overseas students? I mean, what is your unique selling proposition, to use a marketing term.

S Yes, we experienced a transition, what we called marketing channels initially from general approach about ten years ago called Exhibitions and Fairs. OK we attended and connected ourselves with local students coming from everywhere then moved to centre stage and through exhibitions an fairs we built up what we call a set of agents and then we worked with them to recruit students, and those students also coming from different universities and different sectors of economics and society. Now recently we engineered a shift to what we called Institutional Partnerships with universities and colleges in China and directly through what we called a program articulation arrangements, so this one we found that the source of students is consistent and probably Robyn you know in China there are two types of student. One is called 'in quota', the other one is out of quota. In quota students are students who have gone through the examinations, they've succeeded in getting a place through college or university. Through the program articulation process we have access to those students but the benefit to students is a double degree. Ok so they will get a Chinese degree and will get our degree through the articulation. We found that the quality of students significantly increased. OK. So percentage wise, and obviously the institution arrangements just started three years and the percentage is till around 35% and about 35% through the agents as well. And there are about 30% what we call direct applicants. They search the web site and things like that. We wish to change the composition of source of students to improve the quality.

R OK. Do you think Australia broadly does well at international education?

S I think generally Australian education is favourable to Asian students. There's a significant different in education system between Asian countries and Australian education. Australian education is based on equity. So easy access, and favourable learning environment. In Asian countries, their education is purely based on examinations. Well that's natural because so strong the demand than the supplies and then a lot of students purely study for exams and competing each other for a place. This is not the culture and environment in Australia and learning environment in Australia is this, that ah, we encourage everyone to excel in their own way and there's no such thing that, you know, we must get top 10%, things like that, you know. So this is very good. A lot of students who couldn't succeed in Chinese education system, in Asian education system, and succeeded very well in Australia. So in that sense, the big picture and is right. And obviously that come into the living conditions, adaptation processes and linguistic help. And obviously these areas are still in short. We can improve and strengthen.

R Alright, how do you think Australia compares with other Western countries in terms of delivering international students the experience, for example, Britain, the USA, Canada? Do you think we're comparable?

S Um, I think all countries have experienced what we called infant stage of internationalization, (corrects) international education and traditionally, in early days, international education was purely perceived as a commercial activity generating income to the universities. This is an issue of motivation. So in that stage and my setting of university managers/executives is very narrow. They just see if I got a student on campus every problem is gone. But actually it's not. Every problem starts. But people don't see that. They only see the dollar before everything else. But all countries experienced that. OK. Ads I'm not saying. However Australia is one of the first countries who noticed that, that problem, particularly there are nasty cases of collapses of colleges, and students, fake students who come in to study, just working, and the colleges allow them to do so. So since then, and we introduced the ESOS (?) Act, now ESOS act is one of the first in the world and strengthening we must do, help students according to a set of standards. And since then all universities, institutions, are aware that they got responsibilities and from the beginning marketing to the very very end of graduation, the whole process of services, and we need to provide help to international students. So in that sense, I'm pretty happy. Mmm.

R OK, well just coming back to those responsibilities, can you describe your university's philosophy as it relates to international education and international students?

S Yeah, as I say, that in previously, we are learning too. No one knows how to undertake international business in the area of education. More importantly, all universities in Australia are government owned. When institutions are government owned, and they are crying for limited budget, so when they see that there's an avenue to generate income so there's a strong incentive there. Rushing to the project, rushing to the programs and partnerships. And academics sometimes also motivated as well, by visiting a foreign country, teaching, working there is a great incentive. And some universities even encourage academic staff members by paying them a fixed fee for teaching, on top of a salary. Things like that. We all experienced. Our university also experienced what we called using my term, 'cottage' style of English. Cottage means that everyone mushroom, does everything without plan, without purpose, and since I took the Dean's position, I think a lot of things I can share with you. Our university has great attention to quality in such a way that we using quality criteria to review all offshore programs and all partnerships we have at the moment. And we introduce a lot of rationalization. And particularly I'm a professor appointed as a dean of international operations in the case that we want to strengthen academic governance over international operations, not purely business-like.

R But your position is, you're an educator, rather than a marketer?

S Exactly. We need people who obviously we can have managers, OK purely business marketing people to run international education, and change them into academic. That's very difficult. But now there's a trend that over the period of time a lot of academics involved in international relations and maybe due to their personal strengths such as language and cultural background a number of senior academics with diversified cultural backgrounds are appointed as a senior executives managing international operations. That kind of combination of academic knowledge with the business knowledge will be a great attribute to the development of international operations. So yeah, I fall into this category.

R It's a follow up question along the same lines, but perhaps a little narrower in focus. What do you see as your responsibilities to international students?

S I think the key responsibility to international students is what I call integration. And they are not just coming here as a student, they are coming here as a human being. OK, they are not coming here, just purely as undertaking a single task of study. They are coming here to spend a part of their life in Australia. So that concept is not broaden?? enough. So what we see here is that, um, lack of understanding on the needs of international students in this broad concept. Our service are not sufficient, not sufficient, not sufficient in the way that purely, ah, depend on each individual international student to receive, to seek those services which are available to local citizens. But majority of people because of the weakness of language and lack of personality adapting to local conditions easily, don't receive those services and I think government communities are realising that, in dollar terms, I mean, we talk about $16 billion

and $17 billion turnover and also the third, if we use that … commodity in Australia exports, …. Can boost … the economy and don't forget there's a multiplier effect as well because they spend $1 in education, they could have spent $3 more in …., in transport, in food, you know. Creating a lot of jobs. And if we treat it as an industry, I tell you honestly, and also the value for Australia is that we able to bring up a number of youngsters that could be world leaders in the future in their own countries, that ambassadorship kind of connection, they are valuable. So services they are not broad enough.

R It's interesting that you're talking about student integration, because that's exactly my next topic. And you know I just wanted to talk about that in terms of language development, because a common problem is students come here with a language level but they don't understand the oral language particularly so lectures move too fast for them, they're not confident enough to participate in tutorials because by the time they've framed their question the topic's moved on, they don't understand the colloquial language of domestic students. How can universities help students develop those skills?

S I think it's a challenge to teaching and learning in a globalized environment. At the moment the message to our academics is this, that due to the world is globalized, and the composition of students inevitably globalized, the days are gone that you only teach local citizens where you have same culture, same language skills. You don't think even of any additional difficulties. Now due to the composition of students globalized and we encourage academics to research, to improve their teaching and creating a number of new ways in teaching and helping international students but I think this is a long term challenge and our university is launching what we call curriculum …….? Project . There's a significant component I can provide you information is called internationalization curriculum. I think that coming to the difficulties international students have, in their study basically there are two major difficulties. One is not just language. The way they learn is totally difficult. ….are different. For example in their culture, they never had any opportunity, they were not encouraged to speak. Your student just passively listening information. I can't assess how much information get back to their teachers. Hopefully exactly you quoted and they get a full mark. But here it's different. It's not, we don't want them to recite the words from the book, we don't want to repeat stuff from the lecture you have, but we want you to speak, that's a challenge.

R How do you meet that challenge?

S The challenge is that in Asian culture they worried that we could face something, they worried I say something wrong, and they will be labelled by somebody else in the classroom I'm stupid, I don't know, and in also they're worried that if they speak something wrongly, in their mind, all the time that academics may say, look you not good student. So they're worried that labelled and so so obviously gradually students realise that that's a part of learning, so they can change, but that takes time.

R It takes time.

S Yeah, yeah.

R Another common issue that I've found from talking with many students is that really want to mix with local students but it just doesn't happen. Do you think universities have an obligation to both domestic and international students to foster integration, socially and educationally.

S Yes, yes I think universities do, although it's a challenge and I think it coming to the point that we can't force anybody to mix with anybody. OK? But we can create what we call campus atmosphere and we can create a culture that we arrange a number of activities to encourage them to come together, for example study group, we form them together. For example, we call ethnic activities on campus like join fishing ? join walking, things like that. And encourage together or ….these but and also we encourage international students that the more yu mix with local students, the more greater benefit you will get from. We know that it's efficient for you to communicate in your own language with the other people but at the end of the day you're studying an environment exactly the same in China. You didn't come. Because some student group them together, and live together, and learn together and even eat together, so all using their own language, that's why their English language has never been

improved at all so we want to avoid that. I encourage student to live in hostel with Australian people and that's the best way.

R So you've got a lot of activities. Do you think it works?

S Of course it works for some students and may not work others. The difficulty is that it takes time in the way that the feel the benefit of it, and we can't force. We can advise them. That's the difficulty. And, yeah.

R When you say you can't force them. One of the language learning advisers that I spoke to suggested that in tutorial groups for example, academics do force students to work in mixed groups so that you don't have the Australian students peeling off and the Chinese students or the Middle Eastern students

S That's true, it's compulsorily and it's required to a certain extent because of part of the assessment. But there are some success stories in what we call group assessment. They are a lot of failure stories because the attitudes towards study are different. I heard a lot of examples from students, ok, such that ……Australian students wait until last minute, assignment will be due tomorrow, they say ok let's ….but Asian students don't have that confidence. They want to start early, but when they propose to the group members, we start early, they say what you start early. And the second is what we call penalty culture. Because group members of Australian worried that if they take Asian students' marks, group marks, will be unnecessarily devalued because of one person, so what we say is the concept is right, but in reality and there are some difficulties. But at the end of the day, there's no conclusion here. Group study is bad or group study is good. We do have very successful students group studies, good marks as well. But you can see at the operational level it's different expectations, different …… so very difficult.

R Yes, I've heard many stories and in my teaching practice I've had many successes and not with it. It's a function and time and different expectations and maybe a different assessment system that allocates a mark for the group.

S And to the standard of some of the Asian students purely excluded from the group study and the group that did a job for them. You know it's like….yeah, ok.

R OK. So we've got these integration issues and the university's working on those internally, but the same sort of thing happens when students go out into the broader community, and I'll give you an example of one of my students who's lived a very Chinese life since she came here. Moved in with Chinese students, eats Chinese, speaks Chinese, works for a Chinese boss here now she's got PR. She's never really become part of a broader community. Do you thin universities have an obligation to students to help them integrate into the community?

S Yes, we are aware that there's a need for university to encourage students to be integrated into a community but still, we don't think it's university's responsibility. University's responsibility to look after students, to facilitate their studies, their learning on campus. So anything goes beyond campus, we don't feel that we have that direct responsibility.

R Are there no structures you could set up to give students linkages into the broader community

S Yes, yes we do. We call student bodies called …… and we do have funding to support, we encourage them to organise themselves and we are not taking the responsibility that we organize for them for extra curricular activities …

R In your experience, do they participate those in the broader community or do they still stay very much within their own groups?

S Well obviously most of the international students would love to participate but some of them refuse to participate for a number of practical reasons. Most of Asian students have to spend more hours on study, you know, and the common excuse is I am sorry, assignment is due in couple of days, in one week, I can't afford that time to spend time outside. Another one is international student come in from different families with different financial situations. They really think, you know, I can't waste my parents' money to like travel, to you know, holidays, and resort and so this is also a worry too.

R Moving on to students' language, and their language development, what s your university's minimum IELTS language level for international students?
S Yes, we adopt universal language for bachelor degree, IELTS test 6. And no band less than 6.
R So overall 6?
S And no band under 6. If one band lower than 5.5, we have what we call packaged offer with PIBT, Perth Institute of Business and Technology, we have a partnership arrangement with them, they will be required to undertaken 10 weeks English language training, and they can advance into academic program without taking a test again.
R They don't take another test
S Now two bands lower than 6, and then they will take 10 weeks but the minimum requirement is that no average lower than 6, and that's the university criteria. And if the average is lower than 6, we can't help. Now this is under-graduate. Master is 6.5 and no band less than 6. OK. And PhD 7 and no band less than 6.5 Now these are general rules and there are number of programs which require extra high requirements, such as education, to be a teacher, such as nurse, to be a nurse, and yeah.
R Alright. Just personally what do you think the minimum language level is, for students to be able to engage effectively in a second language education experience?
S Personally, I feel that this question is very hard to answer and we know that we need to set some entry requirements such as 6 or 7 or 6.5 but at the end of the day we feel that if we take students meeting those requirements, we assume that their English will be very sufficient. OK? That's the assumption. Obviously the student come in to really study at university, the outcome and experience are different. Different in a way that we don't know how they obtain their results and some students just crack on exams and got it done without learning through many years of English and some learn very well. Another one is, we feel that we did the research called 'student gone through the packaged programs' in Australia will study better than, even than the student who have a higher IELTS score. For example, if you got a 6, you got in an academic program Australia-wide because you meeting entry requirements. Another person got a 5.5 and studied ten weeks and twenty weeks in packaged program, before they come in, but the results are different because those ones who passed through that are better. The reason is that we found a lot of language programs offered through those private providers are more than language. Embedded in core assessment method, study adaptation programs, you know and so ….some of the techniques to tackle the , you know, I mean exams and things. I think so in that sense, there are something more than language we need to provide to the students to help them study. Not just language. So my answer to your question is, yes we do have minimum entry requirements, we assume they meet they are sufficient in English, but however sometimes we don't believe that the outcome could be there unanimous.
R That's an interesting question then….Is IELTS the best test of a student's ability to undertake tertiary study? Or is it the only one that you have available to you.
S Of course our university makes offers according to the entry requirements in English. Not only just IELTS but also in Pearson , TOEFL and a wide range of languages not only from academic point of view. However most of the students provide IELTS because the immigration requirements for student visa, so students don't want to take TOEFL then IELTS again. But now recently that immigration department broaden the acceptance of English language tests from ielts to other toefl to person so in that sense the university requirements are in line with immigration student visa requirements so in that sense it's good. But we don't notice different tests are different in nature. But at this stage we still prefer ielts test. Ielts test is more, not question based. Because it's not like a tick, yes or no. ToeL test, we normally dislike. We take it, but we don't like. Because it's a question and we didn't, what we call if a student didn't know any English, if they tick a a they will get 25%. OK? You see? But IEWLTS test is good because it's text and knowledge based test. Give you a test, you can apply, give you a test, you write a story, your own ability. So in the sense that answers are not yes or no, so in that sense

more more more authentic in showing the knowledge and competence and proficiency of a student in language.

R That's an interesting perspective, actually. We know that a lot of students come into universities through pathways, so they may do a language course somewhere. I had one student who, came in with an ielts five who did a language course associated with Griffith University , didn't learn a thing really. Did his whole degree as IELTS 5, managed to scrape through in various ways that were really not academically sound, shall we say. I mean how can you be sure that you're not having students coming through pathway programs who don't have the required language skills.

S Ah, it's very good question. Now, simple answer is this. We don't take any student which do not meet entry requirements. We can do that. However, it's basically that there's no there's no pathway arrangements at all that when we got a pathway arrangements, yes, and that we will do moderations of their courses, we want to know what courses they offered to students, because there's a process at university for us to recognize and those programs and so we moderate, we review and normally every second year and we test. Also we feed back to those pathway providers the academic results of those students.

R OK, but a student who may have come through year 12 here, who's come out and done a year at a high school and has come to university that way, would you pick that student up?

S Yes, we do and but not many and not many and we got a feeling that the student who finish the high school here in Australia, they normally choose a university that they like to go. And because they better informed, you know, it's not like international student coming from another country, doesn't know anything about Australian universities. If an agent introduce them to this university they just come in and apply without knowing anything, jso in that sense, yeah we do have high school graduates of international students. Obviously they're better equipped in science and social sciences and the natural science subjects.

R And you run a PELA program, you told me. Explain to me how that works.

S Pela is a program we give a test diagnostic test, to all students including Australian students as well, in a particular subject or a particular unit, and then we analyse the language proficiency level …. It's not entry requirement. We can't use it as any way to penalize students. The test results only be used to give us an indication how we, what type of student we got. Or we call Level 1, level 2, level 3. It's like a good, medium and bad. Then we focus on the designated group with poor results and focus on them and how we can help them. Obviously the next stage, we call intervention process, and we do have what we called English assistance, they can make an appointment to see and augment programs through the senior students as well.

R Is that very resource heavy?

S I think at the moment the faculties because this is part of the faculty budget, faculties executives realize that they intersperse some money to support that. E

R But better outcomes in the end.

S But ad hoc ?? Because depending on the numbers, some schools not have, don't have many international students in them. But we see that whether we can provide this kind of service across the university at one centre, but very difficult because the demand is huge, you know, and you ..at the moment, there's no what we call, formal system builded into academic support.

R So you've got the pela system, but you don't really have a formal process to deal with the outcomes.

S No, we do have process but the implementation side, the schools vary from each other. Some schools do more, some schools don't do anything. And depending on their point of view for the investment return, because not enough international students. Yeah. But the business faculty area, yes it's better than any other faculty.

R More students?

S Yeah, more students. They're really willing to spend money. Got developmental programs, you know. Also academic advisers and ……..

R You talked before about integrating the language issues into the teaching and learning, and that's also been put to me very strongly by the academic language learning advisers, that academics, the content academics, need, must, take responsibility for teaching in a way that helps student language. But this is obviously going to be a slow and long process to convince academics that it's their responsibility. How would you push that process?

S Yes, I think that international education the success of international education depends on internationalizing the curriculum. If the curriculum is not internationalized and international students and even local students, Australian students, will not benefit from purely having international students. The only reason we want international students is not their money, is to give opportunity to Australian student and then international students to learn from each other. So that's the purpose. I mentioned that our university has a project of 2012 curriculum project, which is funded by Commonwealth government and quite a lot of money. Now a component of that is called internationalization curriculum, I shared my personal thoughts and … to that process of internationalization of curriculum. I think internationalization of curriculum can be carried out at four levels. The first level is called content level. Say you teach a unit ok? You can internationalise some of the contents. For example, assignment topic. Why you want to use Australian …. Only. You can encourage students to use their own countries and experiences. Called contents, without changing significantly. And also case studies like, examples, or international students is very whatever way into their subject of learning. Is it called internationalization content within their unit. Second one is I called unit level, not content level. We deliver the design of a number of international units for example, international market, international law, and international business for example. Even nursing, you can say international nursing. You give students opportunity to compare the theories and the practices in their different field. Then you open up the window for local student and international to talk about something go beyond our nation. This is called unit. The third one is called minor. So you really over time you develop a set of four units, a set of six units, you can establish a minor in international field for example, nursing with international strand, specialization, and the last one is called a degree. And the degree level you , I wish that you know, I talk to executive deans, I say like my duty is not only recruit students, my duty is advancing internationalizing education at ECU. So I talk to them that I wish that each faculty or each school one international degree in whatever way. And this is you can see, takes long time. Oh really takes long time.

R What sort of time frame would you put on that?

S Oh, depending on the commitment and the strategic decisions of the executives and also the needs, I think generally in general sense Australian education is very good in service level, but not in openness at all. And it seems that we deliver a good educational service to citizens including international students within a confined territory, called national boundaries, ok. And this not very good and I don't know how far. And also be careful, this is not just curriculum, because when you change the curriculum you change the skills and knowledge of academics a ws well.

R Yes of course you do.

S Because they are not used to it. I know a lot of companies, why do you want me to know Chinese company? Why if I don't know? Things like that. A lot of challenges as well.

R I know. Very challenging for a lot of academics who may never have stepped outside their boundaries and I have talked to those …

S Academics…and I know that there's a strong tendency for academics not to change. They're comfortable with the way they teach. They recycle their lecture notes year after year. Because from their point of view it's economical. It's time saving, you know.

R Yeah, but….

S They spend more time on research and publication, things like that. It's a challenge.

R But students, in terms of students, it gives validity to international students' experience that they can bring that to their experience, I think that would be very comforting

… very strengthening for them. But also many domestic students now are going to work internationally, so it makes sense for them to have that broader experience, not just a purely Australian.

S I totally agree with you. We take international students purely as a provider of dollars but actually it's wrong. International student could be a great asset to our learning because they provide their time and opportunity for us to learn o language and … I mean, obviously we need to send our students abroad to study. Our university has a strong incentive and policy to encourage our students to study abroad. And we called the student exchanges – yes we do. We give them money and support. But still, you say, you asked me the question, how long you think that would change. Oh would take along time because you need to encourage even from high school primary school, letting students know now even more modern world there's an inevitable component of learning that's called learning others. You know, it's becoming a natural thing, and parents as well. Australia's young people, this is where I really feel that Australian parents are not responsible for providing financial support to kids to study. But maybe too generalised. I tell you a lot of Asian students received 100% support from their parents. Even the last dollar. Not all international students have rich families. They spend, invest last dollar.

R I had one student in China whose entire village, she was the bright girl in the village, and everyone in that village supported her study. Such a lot of pressure on that girl.

S A lot of pressure

R But there's what you are saying. The value of education. But here the culture is very much about, 'we support you until the end of year 12, and then you have to help support yourself.' It's a n different philosophy.

S It is different. And Robyn I really appreciate talk to me about your research topic, because it fit in our university agenda. We coming to a stage, we ask our self a very hard question. 'Why do we need international students on our campus? Why? Is just for money? ' So that's why I developed called internationalization policy at university so our message is very clear, we want international students just because they can enrich the learning experience of students and the research experience of academics. So all international operations must link to the core business of the university.

R Which is education?

S Exactly. Education. If not related, we don't want it.

R Can you talk about that, because of course the revenue is important and there's another section here I've come back to. How reliant is your university on funding from international education. If it would stop tomorrow what would happen to your university?

S Yes, ah, obviously recruitment of international students just like a business, OK. The more you do, the greater the risk. OK? Because the revenue is not stable. Nobody can guarantee. But the cost is fixed, OK? Now, can you see, say for example at the moment our university international revenue is about 50 million each year, all enrolled students. All of that, 4,500 students both offshore and onshore, and now obviously if you give me a scenario that next day, suddenly that money gone, that's a big impact. Significant impact on the budget, on staffing, immediately. There's no question about that, ok? Now so the question is not not to do it, the question is how we manage it. And lucky that our university is not exceeded in the normal average of international percentage. To my knowledge, average percentage of international student in total in Australian university is 33%, so we are not getting that. So we have a lower risk.

R So is that deliberate policy?

S Yeah, we do have a policy set at maximum, 30% but obviously there is a bit room to getting there.

R So what are your targets for the future? To increase, to maintain?

S No, at the moment, the year before last year and this year, we still on a core quality agenda, because we want to clean it up. What we've done in the last ten years. In the last ten years, a lot of international operations were ……..factored in b schools, without university plan, without university ….policy and people purely focus on money, and selling the program

so cheaply, and take the students without meeting the standards, and we want to close up the loopholes and then ask the question, 'why we need to do this', and secondly, why we need to do it. And we adopt a unitary approach across university. We really strengthen the entry requirements; we really strengthen financial models where we deliver offshore programs. We are not driven by doing it purely or the sake of doing it. We say no to a lot of things, we feel that that in the long run, we can't maintain, we can't do it, and that's it.

R So is this a period of consolidation?

S Yeah, consolidation, and with … and what we called clean it up and yes, we are in a …now obviously the purpose of cleaning it up and seeking quality is not the final outcome, but you can have a top quality of zero quantity and that's not good you know. So but at the moment we focused on quality. Hopefully that agenda will switch to quantity when infrastructure processes and procedures are planned as … in good place, then we go forward.

R When would you expect that to be?

S I think at the moment I plan that probably gradually we'll start, 2014 and 2014 and this year is totally disastrous. Another …

R Totally disastrous?

S Disastrous by our standards that university suffer by …….we have 5% decline, 5%.

R Because?

S I think two reasons. Internal reason is that we rationalized some of agents, although they still we don't want them and that's an internal thing. For example, English pathways we clean it up. Obviously we losing some students. External factor is also very strong. Australia as a market for immigration …..

R I'll come to that shortly

S But particularly you know Robyn in the last two or three years a lot of regulations for international education are streamlines, you know processed. Now recently …….protection scheme and all government inputs ….another one is Esource changes a nd can you see that everyone talk about quality at the moment. It's necessary. But how can we move forward for growth at the moment?

R Too many impacts

S Too many impacts. And you can see those changes are positive. You can see negative.

R Professor, would you say then there's too much government interference in this and maybe it should be left to individual universities to manage their own quality processes?

S Oh, this is what they say. I'll give you one example, ok? Student apply for visa, student visa there's a risk to Australia because they may not be genuine, right? There used to be immigration department assessed students purely on the basis as individual. So risk is that individual. I can reject your application. So if the student default, overstayed, you know, disappeared, and this is individual risk. Nothing to do with university. And gradually they transferred the individual risk to the country risk. They classified countries level 3 and level 4. Can you see then all countries from that China for example is level 4? An assessed across the board. And now they changed it again. They level university as the risk. So every university will be rated as a risk rating. Level 1, level 2, level 3. For example, the recent changes come in March (2012) streamlined visa scheme and government and particularly immigration department offer university a benefit, a benefit this, if you join in that scheme with me, I will guarantee you to issue a visa no more than two weeks time. As soon as you issue COE – that's the benefit. We support that, they like us. But the catch is, every COE issued

R COE?

S CoE …Certificate of Enrolment. ..,That's the document you need to apply for visa, student visa. Now if you issue that immigration will issue visa. OK? And they say that university will be responsible for student being genuine from the very beginning to the graduation.

R So if anything happens to the student it's your responsibility?

S If anything happens, exactly. Now responsibility in the way they call risk rating. For example, cancellations, disappeared, non-completion in due course, change of institutions, so any changes in that visa becoming our problem.

R So you're not compelled to sign up to that process.
S No no, all universities sign. Because if you don't sign, the penalty is your students, the students you process will wait three or six months to get a visa. Cause streamlined visa steamlined visa processing scheme, if you do not join they will treat the paper work as normal, so three to six months. Then factor in recruitments.
R Catch 22
S Yeah, student will not. Now can you see that? Now, I mean the criteria could genuine in three areas; academic genuineness, we have to monitor. We an see ok? We are good at it. Language genuineness, genuine in language, we can control, because we can take a student as long as they meet our entry requirements. But financial genuine? Three criteria called genuineness in academics, language and finance.
R And that third one is a real risk for your university
S Even the Immigration Department cannot protect, cannot guarantee themselves in the past in the old system.
R So if a student fails on that third criterion, what's your obligation then?
S Then our university will be …. In the way that either cancel visa and our risk rating will be affected gradually, or we got to provide some assistance to that student.
R Oh dear.
S Yes. Well we got a catch. Which way you want. You want to allow student continuously. But obviously we don't have material commitment to students to say look as long as you come in here, you don't have money, we till have to have to have you here to study. Now we don't have that commitment yet. But the challenge is this. It's difficult.
R Very difficult.
S Very difficult.
R Is there a risk that students would become very aware of the changed obligation. And perhaps.
S Yes, yes, yes. And because that is true. You are right. Students may take advcantage of this. I know that universities will be rated against this risk. I just stayh ere, I no money. What will you do?
R And students do find out about these things very quickly
S Very quickly
R They do understand very quickly
S And I don't know because it just start in March. Because first start set will be at the end of this year, and other will say they will try two years and by 2014 they will review, 2013 and see whether this system is working or not. The difficulty is that it's not fair, for universities. We are not immigration department, and we can't provide the genuineness of a student. How can we maintain the genuineness of that student.
R And in fact it's making universities, it's directly them away from their core skills.
S Exactly. And we can't argue with government. This is called the Labor, and that's too much political (laughing). Labor always wants to interfere in education. They protect that they know Education, they don't. They introduce My Schools, My University. What's going on here? You know, I mean, it's ….universities are self-crediting. You know self-crediting institutions. You've got to respect….I don't mind that they have some regulations for private providers. They're different. They're companies, their objectives are different. They can close down. Universities can't close down. We don't want to close down. It's different values. But now they apply, assume every university can default.
R That makes it very difficult.
S Very difficult
R And my question was going to be about permanent residence, but you've taken it much further than that. But I guess I would simply say that, do you have dialogue with government about all these issues.
S Yes
R Does the government seek feedback before they introduce these changes, or so they simply introduce them and then encourage then to talk.

S Well the challenge is that most of the people we talk to are managers and executives. They are not making decisions. All they do is listen, take the message to the Minister. But decision's made. I mean,
R So the consultation is really….
S Consultation, the focus was, look how we make it happen. Instead of, modify it or we shouldn't do it,
R Were gong to do it ….We're here to talk but were going to do it.
S Yes, yes….so um. It's a hard. But we don't know yet. So now my team, core admission team, about 12 people there, they keep asking the question now, should we take this student? Do we know, how do we know. Is it genuine enough? Because admission officers got extra work now, because it used to be as long as they meet entry requirements that's fine. I don't get genuine or not genuine. None of the questions are genuine? How my staff members … I mean it's a big responsibility and vague responsibility, but I don't know, we just try. At the moment our university risk already is very low. I'll give you
Some background. Risk rating is that I got a set here but I want to show you ….All university will be rated against all international students' visa situation. They give us sort of experimental data set using the previous data, before the new system, but at the end of this year they will give us the new one, because we want to see according to your methodology what's the risk of rating that we have at the moment. Although we know the data is ….So 2012 is therefore 1, ok. 1 -.2.7 is level 2. Now level 3 university will be out of the scheme. Level 2 they give you warning, be careful, don't reach point 2.7. At the moment our university is 1.4 but they gie all the data, country by country.
R And these in relation to student defaults.
S Yes, I'll show you …. (Leaving room to find spreadsheets) Background talking … indistinct.
Very detail about ……background noise as Professor out of room.
S I'll get you if you want it
R I'd very much like it, absolutely.
S I'll get you spreadsheet. (Talking from adjacent room). I'll print it out.
R Thank you very much
S I'll show you. I'll give you …fades…..
Recording continues while S prints spreadsheets….
Continues, talking while looking at spreadsheets.
S This is the data
R This is the old data
S Look, you can see . Number of active student visas, in effect, how many students got the visa. Number of student visa applications that are being granted and refused or withdrawn. So what happened was that if a student refused the visa refused, it's counted on us.
R Whereas the government refuses the visa, not you….
S Yeah.
R That doesn't make…..
S I know. And see, and number of student visa application granted, or refused, were the appplicant lodged overseas. So, these are all risk factors, but risk indicators, number of student visas that were cancelled, rate of cancellation, number of student visas that are being refused because of fraud. On us! (emphatic) On fraud. Percentage. So these are the percentage. And these things, the risk rating, is accounting, b
Cause total risk is whatever, so it's accounting for the data 28% of the risk contributed, this is 28, and this one looking at the number of student visas that are being refused, and a percentage as well. And number of visa applications lodged on shore where previous visas held, was student visa.
R So why, they're not saying that's a risk indicator.
S Recently they told us to add on new column, how many people after apply for permanent residence before they complete the course, as a risk.

R Why is that a risk?
S Because not genuine. You come here to study, you must finish the study,
R You must finish the study before, alright. But if you finish an undergraduate degree any then apply?
S That's fine. Not counted. So number of students on student visa before they finished a course they apply for permanent residence.
R OK, so that becomes a risk. That is very ….So this is the old one
S No no no. Data is the old one.
R But the categories are new.
S The categories…
R But this is the old data….very interesting.
S But gives us such a feeling that you can see that 1.4
R that's a very interesting approach to deferring responsibility from government to universities individually isn't it.
S I know! Now lucky Chinese student very advanced. We got a good one, less than 1. One thousand. And India, we got in trouble.
(Turning pages and break in dialogue).
S Here, India, 490 students, 2.7. Number 3. I mean….
R Can I look?
S Yeah, but you can't take it away. I mean, just look at it and .
R Of course
S This is, ah,
R Very interesting isn't it with China, twelve hundred, that's your biggest category .7, very low risk, compared with India, 2.78, of
And Iraq 2.67? Another high risk. Some of the countries very strange.
S Saudi Arabia?
R And Kenya. That's getting high too. And Mauritius? I wouldn't have thought you would have that many students from Mauritius.
S Obviously if the number's low here, we don't worry about it, you know. We got highs, it doesn't mean anything. But India, do we want the Indian students or not? Laughing.
R 490….It's very interesting. Yes, see, you've got a high percentage here with UAE but very few students.
S Oh yes. Can you see that this is the
R Now that's interesting. Vietnam, 146 students, and a risk of 2.72.
S That's right. Now all this risk profiles of each country are different within the university, and depending the source of students.
R So you'd understand why India
S Well the question, is …and difficulty is universities cannot discriminate the students. So if we receive applications from India, we can't refuse
R If they've got the other entry requirements
S Exactly. We can't refuse because you from India. The Immigration Department can.

R You're going to affect our risk profile so we don't want you.
S No we can't do that.
R No of course you can't
S Because education make relations do not allow any university to discriminate on the grounds of language, country and
R But ethically and morally you couldn't do it
S But Immigration can. Immigration law empower the immigration department to do so.
R And surely they're more skilled, because that's their core business, keeping the borders. They shouldn't be devolving trhat responsibility to universities.
S I don't know what they are doing. But what can you do, I mean. Another change
S ..

R What do they call this change?
S That's called streamlined visa processing.
R OK. It's a very interesting use of words isn't it ? Streamlined from their perspective, not yours.

S I tell you honestly, student application here, okay, l their application to university. University. Then apply to DIAC. Immigration Department. Now what happened was there used to be, this time, very short. Because university can make decision very quick, whether to take. But this one is very long. Now you know what happens? They shorten this one, sure, but you got to take long. That's your time. Exactly the same.
R But they've just devolved their responsibility .
S Exactly. I'm streamlined. Now you're responsible for it.
R So it's another cost impost, it's another risk, it's not your call
S That's because Immigration Department sacking a lot of people .
R And they're devolving this. I mean it's a very interesting.
S I mean….they even can't verify over many many years, there's no case showing that the overstays, cancellations, are decreased. They got the resources, they've got the money……..we don't have.
R this is very interesting, isn't it, in terms of border control, where all the focus is on some boats coming through Indonesia, when in fact they're now devolving a core responsibility to people who don't have the skills. It's not your core business.
S No it's not our core business. And so this because the difficulty is how can we guarantee a student is genuine for the whole period of study. Because a lot of factors here. Relatives, marriage, you know….laughing.
R Information that you don't have access to, and don't have the authority to seek.
S. No, no. We are not allowed. Like a private investigation. We purely based on the paperwork. Even we can't verify the paper produced to us are genuine or not. We have no means.
R No means to do it. Besides which that's a specialist immigration function.
S Yes. It's so, I'm sorry.
R I do want to come back to just to finish off, because I'm conscious how much of your time I'm taking, than you so much, but I just want you to respond to a couple of things I've heard from students first of all. Macquarie University. One of my students turned up on the first day to study for a Bachelor of Accounting at Macquarie and she was horrified by the number of Chinese students she saw on campus, and she promptly changed her institution. She said, I've come to Australian for an Australian experience, not for a Chinese experience. I mean, is that potentially an issue for other universities that allow their student numbers to build up to the point where they're perceived in that way.
S Yes, this is a problem for the nation. All universities now, a lot of universities ask a collective question. What's the optimal number of international students into our education system. And I'm not take it as a negative thing, more international students a bad thing. But yes there is a lot of matters, we have to pay attention to it. When you change the percentage of international students into a particular course, or particular unit, or particular lecture, the learning and the teaching process will be changed and affected. And from both sides, Ate Australian student don't like it, okay, because and for whatever reason, I'm not talking about racism reason, I'm just talking about learning reasons. And international don't like it either because they say what the point of that. I come to Australia. And some of the private colleges are purely targeting international students without any local student, are ….Because whole class, 90% are Indian students, and some of the problems. Can you see. And now it's not very good. It's definitely not good.
R My student who finished his masters, said he spent three years doing an undergraduate degree and really got into the way of Australian education and liked it, then when he did his master's degree, most of his lectures, he did accounting, he was taught by

Chinese teachers who told him, 'this is the answer', not 'this is how you get there'. So he said 'my Aussie education went back to China'.

S Yes, it's true, because it's called, we call the market driven, and feeding, and eventually we change the way we teach, supposed to teach, because the cohort of students, the body totally changed. I remember that just because I have a lot of information, because TESQA Tertiary Education Quality Assurance. And we apply their set of standards, one of them is called ' ratio of international students to local students'. If that ratio is high, then ……..is at risk.

R At risk in terms of?

S At risk in terms of …well they just say, look, it's a risk in the sense maybe academic sense, ….the learning quality from financial sense as ….could be more business risk because of what it is.

But that percentage treated as a risk at the moment, because the standards are risk controlled. And there are others. Some of the universities that got more international students off campus than on campus. Totally upside down. Yes. And yes, you are responses, student responses, so the question is from national point of view, what's the optimal number of international students we can absorb, we can talk without compromising the teaching and learning quality in Australia. So that's a question. But obviously the highest number we got is 640,000 in total in 2009. That's the highest in Australia history, worth about $17 billion dollars. But now it's coming down. Now coming down. From this international level each university got to ask the question, 'what the optimal proportion or percentage of international students'. We want them, but not too many.

R So, you say that the student numbers are coming down, is that to dthato…what wouald you say are the main causes of

S I think the main causes are changes in immigration visas, student visas, because be careful that international students, the percentage to TAFE and the percentage to universities, different. So in the previous years, the immigration department made a decision that ……. Skill based, and if you finished your ……you can apply for, we need you, a shortage of skills. So a lot of international students study that.

R Hairdressing, cooking. Indian students particularly.

S Exactly. But now, suppose that there is delisted and not recognized, you can see numbers down. So we see significant decline in numbers, up to 50% 60%, in some of the colleges totally collapsed because of that change in immigration. But not many changes in high school education, like universities, higher education, and we maintain that number but are still low but not too many. Probably about 5% each year. 2010, 5%, 2011, 5%, now 5%. But be careful the impact is rolling on. If you take 5%, that effect will be three years.

S Compounding

R Compounding … an a knock on effect to the general economy.

S So this is one factor. The other one is US. Opened the market significantly and they offer visa, one week, they don't have any strict requirements as we do, and a lot of Chinese, particularly Indians, go to the US. And Canada as well.

R Open policy

S Yes, open door policy. Internally, a lot of university becoming more cautious now, and it's called rethinking towards quality. So these are the big factors.

R So there are three issues, Competition, the rethinking towards quality, and the migration changes.

S Exactly.

R I just want to finish off with some comments from the content academics. One is that those who haven't embraced internationalism fully say there's been a dumbing down of curricula as a consequence of large numbers of international students. They find their pace is different, their content is different, and the second thing that they've said is that they are feeling pressure from their institutions to pass international students, and there've been a couple of cases of that – ANU for example – where a lecturer failed an international student

and she was overwritten, and RMIT as you know faced an auditor general's enquiry into their practices when it was found that international students were being given papers. Now these obviously are quality issues. But do you think that's in universities generally or do you think these are isolated incidents.

S I think in general sense it's isolated because there's no such pattern that most of international students fail than we let them pass. And this is my assessment. I think that 92-95% of students succeed in getting a degree, completing a course in due course, even a little bit of time, they complete. The only those ……very special. For example, a student coming here fail the unit three times, according to university would be exclusion. Now from student point of view what would you do? You won't get a degree. So that's called ……nature, you selling something to me, but I cant get it. So that's a challenge. That's a challenge.

R So how do universities, how would your university deal with that.

S Well obviously at the moment, very careful, extremely careful. First of all, we really want to see the case is special, is unique. If, even if we make a decision, will not change our policy, our positions. Because it's a difficult balance. It's a balance on the compassionate grounds and academic requirements. OK. Obviously at the end of the day is that we respect academic assessment. If that particular lecturer or ….doesn't want to change, nobody can touch it. Yes, that's the bottom line.

R Is there an intervention then after a student has failed a subject twice, to make sure that that he or she doesn't fail the third time.

S Yes, obviously we engage with student conversations, and how we can deal with them, but very strange some of the units, for example, economics and law, these are the two most difficult students, and some students, no matter how many times they do it, they just can't do it.

R They can't get?

S They just can't get it. However those units are core units. In Business. Now we said please, we can arrange you not to do to this and get a degree, a normal degree, not like Accounting. "no no, I want Accounting.' So this is difficult one. So obviously when coming to this one, we don't want to put the pressure for individual academics which eventually becoming whistle blower to the newspaper saying 'dean says, executive dean, head of school's pushing me to change the result without any reason.' No.

R So you wouldn't, there's no intervention that you can force a lecturer to change.

S So normally you start with the lecturer, and from academic point, and say 'show me the assessments'. OK, we explore, 'could you, are you willing to consider another independent assessment' and you know, sometimes if the results are very far away from 50 which is a passing mark and we don't bother. We just tell students. But the difficulty is within 5 marks and 3 marks, that's very difficult.

R And very subjective often.

S For example, I experienced student, an international student now in Sydney, he needed last unit in MBA program, economics, he failed twice with us. And he said, 'laoshi (teacher) I can't do it now. So I said alright, I can help you to undertake a unit, a similar unit, I got from another university, and she failed again. 47, always a 47.

R 47. A pass conceded, almost.

S Right. Then she appealed the result given by another university, appealed to me. I said 'sorry' you know, because I can't change the result, even my university. How can I change the result at another university. You got to go back to another university, appeal them, as long as you give me 50, I'll let you pass. Because that's all we need.

R I had a student, similarly, she failed revenue law, her last subject. And she failed revenue law. And she went back to China thinking she'd passed her degree, went back for Spring Festival, came back and found she'd failed. Had to sit it again.

S I don't think we, we have a consistent pattern here deliberately letting students pass and in bulk, you know. I don't think so. I think no university want that. The only problem with that particular case, and maybe the executive office put extra pressure, you can see that the dilemma you know, from a human perspective.

R But most university lecturers, many university lecturers would be thinking about their futures, and if someone came and suggested that perhaps , um, they might like to review their marks, would there be many who'd hold firm?
S That depends on the individual lecturer's passion. It's a human element here, because some academics sympathetic to the situation would , 'what a pity. If I was in her or his case, situation, you know I think it's a pity to me, so say alright do something to help you know, or supplementary or something like that, you know. Some academics are totally against it.
R Very rigid??

S Very rigid. And there's nothing you can do.
R And there hasn't been any attempt by this university to get assessment changed to accommodate international students.
S No, and obviously there will be appeal system, but students can take an appeal … time . Appeal system is a system on unfairness. If you say you are treated unfairly you can appeal. Not the whole academic mark. You can't appeal say because I failed this one, I want a pass. You could identify this particular academic didn't treat me fairly. Very hard to prove. Very.
R The absolute final question. It's come through with every student in my case study, and that was originally where I started, that we know that a lot of our students don't always do their own work. There's a lot of plagiarism, students taking testes, electronic testes at one university, there's an electronic test system which many other students. What sort of processes do you have in place here to make sure that students are completing their own work and when they graduate, it's work that they've done themselves.
S Yes, I think first of all we have a technical instrument that's called 'testing device I think it's e on the website. Every student must submit their thesis through that software.
R What's it called? Turnitin?
S Yeah, Turnitin. Every student must get a report of Turnitin and say what we call compatibility. Zero for example. I f you can probability very high, so you won't be able. So we ask them to check through that system software.
R So that identifies too students who are not used to referencing, for example. Or who are making genuine mistakes.
S Yes, obviously that software will check that assignment against literature available in the internet or other place, ok. Could be reference issues, and could be…as long as contents are the same, we call the word to word is the same, you know, then will be plagiarism suspect. But obviously this is technical and students would normally be deterred in submitting if they have this we ask them to attach so they might find something. But if they submit it and with that report, obviously we would have an accommodation, we say 'how come'. So we go through the paper with them. Is there a technical issue or is it really plagiarism. There are two types of plagiarism. One is plagiarism is just stealing someone else's work but from classmates or from other ….. so we really careful in the way in yes, there is plagiarism here, but abuses … is a technical issue. Is a technical issue. We would remind them, this is the first time, we would record it. Put the references. And if it really copied from somebody, or from student, then we have zero tolerance. For example, sometimes very hard for us to identify who copied from whom. Say yeah, me. Come in and found two papers identical, then normally we say two of you zero, unless one of you give us a case, provide you didn't copy him, he copied you.
R Is it widespread, do you think?
S No. I think, that organizational culture. Universities' culture doesn't conduce to this kind of behaviours from day one, local students all , you know. But some of the private, if the percentage international student very high, then under pressure or whatever reasons, or convenience, yes that …..
R Yes, it seems to be that it is more widespread in institutions that have ….Macquarie is one I've heard about. Very high cohorts….
S Yeah, there's a market out there. There's a market out there. And people selling everything.

R And they also have some practices, some online tests where students get a student number and a code, and it's very easy for someone else to sit a test.
S Yes, there are some accidents as well. Like I left a file or USB in a computer, or come student are very nasty … your work …. Let me have a look ……..but not purposefully.
R And it is cultural too to share.
S Yes, and not like academic issue here, but that's my assessment. We do experience it, some of the plagiarism, but probably more in offshore programs. But we zero tolerance, and zero first time it the zero f, second time is zero for the course.
R That's a powerful deterrent
S Yes, yes. We put a zero immediately until you prove the case you are not guilty, because we've got the evidence. You prove you are not guilty.
R Reverse the evidence

S Reverse the evidence there, you guilty. But it's yeah, but alright.
R professor, that's been very rich for me, this interview, thank you very much. And it gives me a lot of information. If there anything that you'd like to add that I haven't covered, that you think is important.
S No I think I really you know, value and appreciate your research topic . Probably start with the narrow topic language, but very broad into the education. I think is a challenging to question to all universities and executives in managing international. The key question again and again, why we want international students. I think it all boil down to that. And then all other questions about ……percentage of international students, all can be followed into the big picture.
R Why are we doing it
S Why are we doing it. And universities are allowed to have different answers to that same question, but you have to have an answer.
R You have to have the framework.
S Yes, that's right. But thank you for coming. I really appreciate and enjoy the conversation with you.
R Thank you very much, thank you for your time.

Interview 20 July 2012, Professor Robert

This is an interview on 20 July 2012 with……..who's the former pro-vice chancellor international at …University.

R Robert, what I am going to do today, and you know I have given you a copy of my thesis topic, and we've talked briefly about what it's about, what I am going to do is ask you a number of questions, grouped questions, I think I've got about 6 different categories here, and I'll just signal when I'm moving on, and if at any stage you think my question isn't the relevant one, I'd be very happy for you to inject your own question and answer into that. Alright, so I'm going to talk to you, just from your experience with your uni,, having been there, what, how recently did you hold that post?,

B Well I've, I mean really I've been in international education for 20 years and was, sorry, almost 25 years, and so was almost at the beginning with. I think the first trip abroad was November 1987 and the first trip I made for the University of Wollongong was December 1988 and then for four years while I was still a practising faculty academic I represented the university overseas on recruitment missions and other various other things, attending important conferences and so on, until I was then enticed out of academe into the commercial arm of the University of Wollongong to be responsible for setting up a campus in Dubai. And so for the past 20 years I have been, held senior financial management positions in three different universities, the University of Wollongong, the University, for six years the University of Western Sydney for six years and Macquarie University for the last six and a half years, seven years all of which adding up to 20 years. And I've held various positions. I've been a divisional general manager in the commercial arm of the university, I've been CEO of a company and I've been as you've said, pro-vice chancellor international, but also I've been interim dean of two of the graduate school of management and the … school at …. So in each of those, and I've also held, or been on committees or associations. I've held, been a director of things, and so I was on the Affiliation of International Education peak bodies which negotiate the ESOS act and the assessment levels with both DIMIA and DIMA, DIMA and DETCHA. And as well, so that, so the code of conduct. And then I was also on the director of the IELTS Australia for four years, I think it was, and so each of those roles, so you could say I've played a role in international, at the higher levels of international education.

R So your expertise scans the …

B The 20 years, not just the two years as pro-vice chancellor at xxxxxx

R Alright, I will talk to you about that though, because you have the experience and the expertise from looking at all those aspects, so that makes it a very rounded contribution

B The point is it was offshore and onshore.

R Yeah. I did take a note of that. Some of the students in my study are at Macquarie at the moment, so if you can talk about that for a moment. What percentage of the student cohort are international? Roughly?

B You need to look at that in two ways. There are now probably 35,000 students at xxx, but of those 35,000 probably only half are full time students, and approximately half of those are international students. Half of the full-time cohort. So you're talking about – it's fallen a bit, as it has everywhere – but eight thousand students, international students on campus.

R What percentage of those are Chinese, do you know.

B Well it may have fallen a bit, I don't know, but if I go back, maybe if I give you the statistics of the time that I was, so I think there were 32,000, there were 17 and a half thousand full time students, and nine thousand of those were international, and of those, 50% were from mainland China and 10% were from Hong Kong. And you need to add to that of course though the numbers will not necessarily be great, Chinese students from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore. So very large, and xxxxe was more dependent on China than any other university.

R That's an interesting comment, and I'll come back to it.

B `And more dependent on international students than any other university.
R Robert how does x, given that they've got that huge student cohort and very dependent on international xx how does xxx market itself to overseas students? I mean, what's the unique selling proposition, as it were, to use a marketing term?
B Well the way in which it has done it in recent times, since the new vice chancellor whose term is just coming to an end, xxx is that it sought to position itself as really as one of the top eight universities in Australia, and particularly in research and it's done that successfully. It has now breached the self-acclaimed group of eight, and the other thing is it's seeking to get itself into the top 200 universities in the world, by the Shanghai Jiao Tong measurement and so on, and certainly it's been coming down from over 300 it's now well in the mid two hundreds.
R But I mean, positioning yourself as a research university, is that a marketing proposition for international students. What do you offer international students?
B Well I think it's a question of raising the profile. I would say that I mean that it's very interesting. If you take … there are five, the last five universities to be created as universities in their own right from the beginning and the very last is Macquarie, but they are Murdoch in Western Australia, Flinders in South Australia, Latrobe in Melbourne, Griffith in Brisbane and Macquarie. Now I would have said seven years ago, if you asked what was the DNA of those universities, what was the personality of those universities, you'd be very hard pressed to do that, and I think Macquarie is the first of them to actually define itself. And this is the way it has sought to define itself and distinguish itself as being meritorious, distinguished, and the others are probably yet to do that. There have been other universities created since but I think they've all been created out of things already existing.
R Can you describe then xxx philosophy as it relates to international education?
B It realizes it's highly dependent on it. It wishes to be not only an international university, but an internationalized university. And there have actually been a couple of stages in the internationalization of Australian education, and the first really was just to go out and recruit students for the purpose of money and so on. The second I think has certainly been embarking on this since the time I was pro-vice chancellor international and I was certainly seeking to do that. There I was actually internationalize the curriculum, internationalize the faculty, internationalize really the experience of Australian students as well, and to assist in … one of the problems is that when students came to Australian, yes efforts were made to acculturise or acculturate them, but there wasn't nearly enough effort and enough expenditure on actually ensuring that there experience was the equal of the Australian students. And across Australia, government universities are really concentrating on this now.
R With what degree of success, do you think?
B I think it's going to be a long road.
R Alright. Laughing…..I'll ask you later to define 'long'.
B Well, no, I think that you really have to change the way in which people teach. Are they….for example, let's just take something. If you're going to take the economy, economics, are you only going to teach the Australian economy or are you going to actually include other things. If you go offshore and teach in Hong Kong, are you going to insist because you wrote the book on the Australian economy, you're going to teach that in Hong Kong are you going to take into account everything that's in …the students are reading in Hong Kong.
R It's a very interesting point and it is long term, obviously.
B And it's a question of how that percolates to individual academics. And whether it's in the Learning and Teaching training that is being given to new academics. And you probably have more chance of success with younger academics than you do with older ones.
R That's what I'm hearing … laughing. Look just on the point though of these large international cohorts, what impact do you think having such a large international cohort has on universities. Well firstly on universities, but also on their domestic students because I've got some information coming through there about how domestic students respond.
B Two things, you might want to ask me this question twice. If we take the whole question of what international students want when they come, they want to actually have a

wide and significant experience with Australian students. They don't actually get it because they're ...the difference between, for example, American universities and colleges and Australian universities, and also to a degree, English universities, is that their in America, students go away to college.
R And in the UK.
B And in the UK. After all, Oxford and Cambridge are down in the country, as it were. Exeter, Warwick, whereas ours are commuter universities, so our students get transport of one kind or another, do their classes, and go home. And they may be working as well. And so you actually find on a campus like … that if you walk around it, it seems overly international. That's because the Australians
R Are being and gone
B Are working, at the beach, at the pub or something like that, and different. Now if you ask me the question again, I'll give the other side.
R Alright, and actually I'm coming to questions about student integration
B Yes, but just ask me …..
R So that was the international cohort perspective, and the other side of the question was from the domestic perspective
B But just ask me the question again
R Ah, what impact do you think having large cohorts of international students have on universities and their domestic students.
B Right. Well the other side is the commercial side, and there is no question that Australian universities have been able to greatly expand their research capacity, their facilities, their infrastructure, IT and otherwise their ah, support services because of the international dollars.
R And course offerings?
B And to give you the example of …, don't necessarily want you to quote it, but it was in 2008 that the millions of dollars coming from students , international student income exceeded the money which the university was receiving from the government.
R That was 2008? And that was really at the peak?
B No no no, the peak came later.
R Came later?
B Was doubled in the three years after.
R Alright,
B It's gone off the boil since then
R For various reasons. Alright just before we move on to these questions on integration
B So if for example we take if we take what is now you know, three quarters of a billion, two thirds three-quarters of a billion dollars, this isn't for ?? but budget, you know a third of it's coming from international students.
R Just to finish off this section, and then we might pause for a minute. Do you think Australia does international education well? I mean if you compare with other Western countries like Britain and the US. You talked about those and their delivery. Canada. We're facing increasing challenges from Canada for international education. Just in terms of how we deliver it, what's your feeling on that?
B The view in the industry from its inception and this is when the Colombo Plan was set aside and Australian universities for the first time were allowed to charge overseas students, the view has been that Australia has always competed on price.
R On price?
B On price, not on quality.
R So, what about the quality question then.
B Well if you think about what it costs to do a degree in England compared to here, and now in America again, if you're talking, the thing about America, when Australia has always projected, tried to project itself, government and many of the institutions as 'if you come here, there is the same quality across all our institutions'. We know that isn't true, but if you go to America, you get what you pay for. And so if you are going to pay these huge prices you go to

Harvard, Princeton or Yale and you get all the benefits of doing that, Stamford, Berkeley. Berkeley is not as expensive as the others. So that has been, the Australian dollar of course was low, so that's why I say, sorry, I should have put it a different way. We've always had until now an advantage on price, because of our low Australian dollar. Now the dollar is not low, so therefore we are having to compete even more and that's why we finding it even harder.

R The students don't tell me that. The students tell me that the dollars are the dollars are the dollars, and they've got it. What they're telling me is that it's the migration, the constant changes to migration, and there's another common theme that's come through with what they're saying is they came for a Western education experience, and one of my students from Macquarie put this very very succinctly, but if I could find the quote. But what she said was 'I turned up on campus and all I saw were Chinese faces,' and she left.

B That comes back to the commuter thing and so on…Whereas if you go away to an American college, they're all there.

R Indeed. They're all on campus. So OK, Obviously the dollars must play a part, they may…..

B Just come back to what you said about the students then.

R The students say it's not the dollars that are driving them offshore, it's migration. They're going to Canada because of stable migration patterns.

B Yes, and the point is that the Australian Government, just to take an example the Australian Government made I think, six changes, made six changes probably in about 2010, made six changes to the rules for international students, and one of them was that from the level 4 country, the amount of money you had to have in your bank account was trebled. Now, here you are, you are a family etc, you've planned the whole thing, and suddenly they say you know, three times as much. What are you going to do? Are you going to wait until, your child's getting older and older, do you wait til you've got that money, or do you say 'no thanks, I'll go to Canada.'

R I'll go to Canada. Then there's the other issue too that all the changes are, the latest one on 1 July which now means you lodge an expression of interest and wait to get invited, and so on and so on. We'll come to that.

B Do you want to take the break and I'll pour a little more. (Pause in tape).

R Alright and we're recording again. And the next section looks at student integration and we talked about that briefly, or we touched, you touched on that in the first section. In terms of Chinese students' language development a common problem is that they can't understand the oral language. Lectures move too fast, they don't understand the colloquialism language, they can't frame language quickly enough to participate in tutorials. From where you sit, do you think universities do enough to assist students to develop their language skills?

B Well….pausing

R Or should they have these skills when they come?

B Well traditionally the expectation has been that they will reach an IELTS score that will allow them to do this. Something that needs to be taken into account there that as well as students entering via IELTS, it may have changed now, but everyone had an IELTS score, but it used to be, it was that universities set up their own English language centres, developed their own tests, and then students moved through that and, and through the tests of other institutions which they evaluated as being appropriate, they moved straight into university without doing IELTS. There's also the question of whether the IELTS score is a good measure of actual capacity for academic English, and you know, performing. What the universities sought to do, they would have different streams, so that if students were going into commerce, then they were in the commerce stream for various aspects of their English language training, and their assignments were tailored to that, and if they were going into Arts, similarly there would be an Arts background and so on. And they also did this through.. you could enter foundation studies at a lower level and the English there was very much academic English.

R So, I mean, I was going to talk about…..

B And as far as they're actually understanding, this has led to a serious questioning, probably in some way instigated by this, as to the value of the lecture. But that's been questioned for a long time.
R The value of lectures?
B Lectures. As opposed to tutorials and seminars where's there's interaction. So where a lecturer is lecturing and pontificating as it were, how can you judge what is being taken in and also, most universities now have I-lectures, which means that the, and what happens is that the students are not attending the lectures. They're looking to download the lecture and view it, and then of course with everything else they do, there is evidence they download right at the end and they are trying to take everything in and they can't possibly (see Philomena's comment about this) and if they have problems in with language skills, when they simply can't take it in at the rate necessary.
R What you are suggesting is really quite revolutionary in terms of changing a structure that's been in force in education for decades, to meet the needs of international students who don't have the language skills to participate in that traditional style of education.
B But it's true of Australian students as well. They're not attending lectures either. So for example you might have a class, you might have a group of, a course with 200 and this is across universities, it's in the literature I'm sure,. Yu have 250 students in a course, and in the fourth week there are 60, 70 attending and by the middle of the course there are 40 attending.
R Yes, I've experienced that myself.
B And which is a huge problem to take the other side where universities are questioning, this is they have to basically by, as it were, law, provide a space for everybody, so they have these large, they don't have enough large lecture theatres to cope with the numbers in a course, which might be a thousand, so they have to have four different lectures, but you end up with small numbers in these lectures. So there is the side of the problem for the administration.
R Sure. But I mean, that's been so for a long time. Domestic students not turning up. They only come to what they're assessed on and you know they get 10 points for coming to a tutorial so that's what they come to. But what you're saying is that, correct me if I'm wrong, but I think what you said was you've got these international students, they don't cope with the language, and therefore we need to look at how we deliver education and whether we deliver it through tutorial and seminar and I-lectures, rather than in the traditional lecture/tutorial format. Is that correct?
B Yes. More expensive to do it by tutorial of course.
R Of course. But it doesn't get around the question either than students, even international students, in a tutorial can't frame a question quickly enough, they can't process the information, frame a question and then ask or participate even in tutorials. It's not just that they can't take in the language. They can't process their responses. So tutorials aren't not necessarily going to help those students. And what they've been saying to me is 'we need more one on one'. How do universities cope with that sort of resource heavy demand. They can't, can they? Can they?
B No. Well only in Oxford and Cambridge. And even there, they no longer do it in first year.
R So how do universities, what do they do for these students who sit there wide-eyed, thinking 'what's going on?'
B Well and the problem is that the universities in America and in Australia, and mostly in England, are having larger and larger cohorts and they're bigger and bigger universities, and so they're less. You know, Cambridge is a small university. That's how it's able to do it. And if you take Oxford of course, people are actually, they don't join the university, they join a college, and a college may only have 63 members/students.
R And when you're talking about 9000 international students, isn't feasible, obviously.

A common issue for Chinese students is they all say they want to mix with local students, but it doesn't happen. Do you think universities have an obligation to foster that integration?

B Yes, they need a buddy system, and things need to happen in the first week really, and be followed up in the second and third. What often happens now happens in the first week and then it will fizzle. And so international students really do need to instead of staying with a relative, and it doesn't help if they stay with a relative or if they get in small groups and take an apartment or something like that, so that they are really able to just speak their own language. They doesn't help their work at university either. So they need to actually be, they need the experience of being able to go into an Australian home and sit at the table in an Australian home. Not that that kind of behaviour exists necessarily now. People lap-feed in front of TV and so on.

R That's very true. What does xxx do to foster integration.

B Those things, it has. And there is…and if you go n the website you will find this, there is a person in charge of student wellbeing and these things didn't exist before, but they are now, and they're and they're probably across ..And there is a whole interest in learning and teaching. There are associate deans of learning and teaching, there is an office of wellbeing, and that goes all the way from counselling to every aspect of students' welfare.

R Does it work?

B Well it's working a lot …. …there's a lot more money being spent on it. A lot more is being done. As well as that you have an organisation which is able to run a centre for , call centre, where if you as a student from RMIT or Macquarie , Latrobe say, you phone up and you're in a bit of trouble, you don't have any money, you can't get home, it's two in the morning, whatever, when the call centre answers, just as it does if you're having trouble with your car on the road, they answer as though they're actually you. Now the call centre, the company that is doing it, does this with expensive cars, so as opposed to the NRMA, they do it with expensive cars, so if you've got a Mercedes, you call up, they speak to you, they see from the number it's a Mercedes, they speak to you on behalf of Mercedes. They don't speak as the organisation. That's all there. Similarly you ring up and it's a Latrobe, the Latrobe number, they speak to you, give you the advice they can, counsellor, if you need emergency medical help they put you straight on to … if however it's something that can be dealt with, you're anxious about an exam or something like that, they will give you the number to ring in the morning and they will send an email to the ….

R Who runs that centre?

B Well behind that is Alliance and it's Mondial. and Alliance. And they're the ones who do the cars as well.

R Very interesting.

B But let me say with your car, and we have a Mercedes, you never actually know it's them because, and, you don't pay as you pay annually for the NRMA, you don't pay for that. In fact it's in your purchase fee and the company pays for it. So the relationship, the relationship between the organisation that does it, and the university or with Mercedes or any Porsche or any of those, that's the relationship, not the relationship, there is no relationship with you. But what means is that a university can, it handles all calls, from 8 o'clock to six o'clock during the day, but in the evening and at weekends you have this. And that is a new service that's only existed for a couple of years.

R And in terms of building a relationship with students and developing their security…

B Well just being able to support them out of hours

R Is tremendously

B Very important for international students

R Many of whom are very young. Look, just coming back to the integration, there's a lot being done on campus and I appreciate it's a long term focus, but the same integration issues face international students when they venture into the broader community. Do you think universities should have any degree of responsibility in fostering those external activities, to

assist integration, or do you think universities' responsibilities stop once they've looked after the educational aspects.

B Yes, I wouldn't say they should stop. It's a question of whether they can financially afford to do it. And whether they have the resources.

R We talked before about IELTS and pathway programs, and I'd like to talk to you now about language and language development. What minimum language level, let's take IELTS as being the standard for universities, what minimum IELTS level do you think international students should have to enable them to engage effective in Australian education.

B Well it was universally regarded as 6 back ten years ago, it then became 6.5 and it's now required to be 7 and even 7.5 for things like translating and interpreting and so on, and law and things like that.

R But say an accounting degree, a 6.5?

B Well that's where it is, all, most universities.

R I know that there's where it is, but do you think that's what it should be. I'm talking about effective engagement, not just getting through exams, but actually effectively engaging. Is 6.5 high enough, do you think?

B Well ideally it would be 7, but if you do that you would need to, you may need to make all Australian students and academics sit for it as well.

R Laughing. OK. Some students we know come with an IELTS 5 or 5.5 and they use the pathway programs into tertiary study, and they go to the Macquarie language institute or the Griffith University language institute and then they're not tested. I mean obviously they have some test…

B No, they're fully tested the question is ….

R They're fully tested, but it's not apples and apples test is it? It's not another IELTS test.

B Well it's meant to be.

R Yeah, but it's not, it's not. Because we know that students come through, they do a 5, 5.5 and then some of them only do 8 weeks and how

B You cannot from 5.5 make the ….

R You can, you do. I can tell you I can assure you, it might not be in your university, but it does happen, most definitely.

B It was regarded as necessary to do ten weeks of English and you can check with IELTS Australia, ten weeks of English to move .5.

R That's my point though, that I'm coming to.

B You're talking about lowering of standards that just shouldn't exist.

R But it does exist. I'll give you can example of one of my students who came out with a 5.5, she came and she did her 8 weeks of language study, she went into an undergraduate degree, she then transferred over and did some hospitality studies, she wanted to improve her English so she ended up at working at the Sheraton hotel and the Vibe Hotel in a multi-lingual team where she was required to speak English. She then went on to the University of … she got her undergraduate degree, she then went on to the University of NSW where she did a Master's degree in Finance and then she wanted to put in her application for permanent residence before the language hurdle increased yet again, and she tested at 5.5. Now there's a girl, who's done two degrees including a master's in finance at the university of NSW and is still testing at the same language level that she tested at when she was given a provisional offer. So it does happen.

B Well it's incomprehensible.

R It is incomprehensible. And it's either something wrong with the testing, or with the IELTS as a test. As you said before, there's a question about whether IELTS is an appropriate test for academic capacity, academic ability. It is …

B I can't answer the question.

R No, there's no answer to the question I guess. That's the point. So, they use these pathways programs and you're saying IELTS says half a point, ten week, half a point. OK, some of them do come with 5 even, or 5.5 but they don't do another IELTS test. Should they be required to. Just to sort of make sure that they ….

B I think you've got to ask that in the industry and you've got to look at the quality of the English language programs. You know, you'd need to do a test across things. But certainly, the universities that are serious about this and have very good English language centres, they have had considerable success with students.
R And there'll always be one or two I suppose, but unfortunately I don't think it's just one or two. What I'm hearing and seeing, it's more than that, and you know these pathway programs really are allowing students….
B I think universities, I think there's a point at which universities have to sit and lok and say how many international students in relation to how local cohort can we reasonably integrate to use your verb, support and achieve the right outcomes.
R Do you have any sense of what might be the right mix?
B Well if you go back to when it all began, the aim was to eventually rise to 10%, once 10% was reached, it became 15%, once 15% was reached, it became 20%.
R And now?
B I would say 20%.
R And 20% is manageable?
B We say that, we say that but if you go, if you take the London School of Economics, it's some extraordinary percentage of international students. 75%, something like that. Does anyone think the LSE is…they did give a degree to Gadhafi's son.
R Maybe he had good English.
B Well, he bequeathed a lot of money or he ….
R. Of course
B You could say bequeathed.
R These whole pathway programs, I know that Griffith University, for example, has got a compulsory language subject, a credit subject, for all international students.
B Yes, they are doing that, a lot of universities are doing that. Taught by the universities, taught by the Department of Linguistics, usually.
R And then you've got also a lot of universities have got a diagnostic test they run for all students the nts in their first term, international or domestic, which is helping students who are coming in from maybe the lower socioeconomic areas if I can say that. But any rate, these are trying to address that issue. One of the groups of academics I've talked have been the ALL advisers, the language and learning advisers, and their very strong view from each and every one of them is that language counselling is currently being done by them but it should be integrated into teaching and learning in all the faculties, and that means the content academics would have a responsibility for language development. Is that feasible?
B Well if you think of the way in which we were taught both at primary school and at secondary school, and I would say at university as well, everybody regarded themselves, every teacher regarded themselves as a language teacher, and if you received, no matter where you received an essay from, from a philosophy lecturer or a history lecturer, maths or whatever, if you had an incorrect word or if you mis-spelled something, it would all be corrected, and so you received instruction and they also thought about the way in which they taught and expressed themselves as well. I'm not sure that exists at university.
R No. I'm sure that it does either. Because coming through very,….
B But one of the things you might consider is to look at the students that you have, the quality, the extent and the quality of the comments which they receive. The way in which their essays are marked. Is it simply read through, tick, cross, such and such, and a good or not so good at the end, or is there a proper examining, or are the numbers so great that they can't actually manage that. And the timeframe in which marks have to be in prevents it. I don't know.
R And this is a constant complaint from the people I've talked to so far. We don't have time, we don't have time. We're not language experts. And also the thing that's also come from….
B Interrupting … and you have lecturers, of course, for whom English is a second language.

R Indeed. Yeah.

B And that's the extreme end of things now, where you have both lecturer and student just to take, at the individual level, both of whom have a non-English speaking background and a different cultural background, and intonation, and a different accent. So where does that leave….?

R And you also hear the comment, and I came across this at the University of Queensland when I was teaching there. 'Are we marking their language or are we marking their content'. And that's something that universities don't seem to have resolved and that leaves the content academics in a very difficult situation.

What would be required then to ensure that the content academics are more mindful of the international nature of their classes, in terms of both the language, but in the broader academic issues, like internationalizing curriculum as you talked about before? Is that widely done? Is it on a path to being done?

B No I think the way in which it would happen is with, I mean if you go back thirty years, academics were appointed on the basis of their academic record, their research etc. There was no training of academics to teach. Certainly 40 years ago. Thirty years ago it started, 25 even. These days certainly efforts are being made, but what you would need is a really…, these issues would need to be developed in…, it has to do with the induction of new academics. You will have to start with new academics and in the whole induction process it will have to be much longer than just the first two weeks or something like that. It will have to be over time and they will have to be introduced to all of these aspects that they will need to participate in. But then academics will tell, particularly new ones, will tell you they are time poor, because if they don't get their research up they are not going to get tenure, and if you are there spending all of this time, they are not going to be able to prepare adequately for their classes and so on.

R It's a huge professional development exercise isn't it?

B And the other thing, there are so many different things now for academics to do, unlike in the past, there are so many demands on their time of a bureaucratic nature, putting in research. If you're a research scientist, putting in research grants, time writing those, doing those, the moment you win one, then of course you're doing all the reporting for it. Etcetera, etcetera, it is … the life of an academic has changed dramatically.

R But needs to change some more if you've got a truly international faculty?

B That's right. So it used to be monocultural and there weren't the same measurement by government and by their own institution and so on.

R So what's the resolution? I mean, there has to be one because you can't continue to have….

B Well I think the pressures will continue to mount on the academics, on the students, on the resources of the university to assist, to support, to assist them. And…and things have improved. I mean it would be wrong to think they haven't. They have greatly improved and they're moving in the right direction but it's … there's a much greater sense of of social inclusion. I mean, you have the term 'social inclusion', which didn't exist before. We've got student wellbeing, which didn't exist before. So you have the Office of Social Inclusion, you have the Office of Student Wellbeing, etcetera. Universities are well aware of the problem. It's a question of how they can….

R And how they allocate resources to deal with the problem

B And how they can actually communicate with students because modern students no longer, I think we've talked about this in the past, but modern students don't ..if you take Y generation students, you know they don't wear a watch. Why would I need a watch, I've got my phone. They're no longer reading emails. Universities can't communicate with them through emails because they don't open them. It's all social media now. But then on the other hand if the university goes in and uses social media, the view is 'what are you doing there – that's our space.'

R You're cynically trying to invade my space?

B And yes, we don't want you doing that, and so on. And if you take the whole thing of students texting, writing letters home to their parents, all those things … you see you don't actually have the culture of developing the writing skills that we had, of writing home to your parents if you weren't …parents, even week for years, even when I was married. They don't do that any more, they send off a text. I mean, 'great' is GR8. It's not…and so spelling goes out the wall. And it's all, grab this, that, and you have situations, and this is to digress, but you have situations and I've heard of this, where a person is in an interview for a position and the phone rings, and he says 'excuse me' and answers and immediately sends off the text. And the person in this selection panel, the head of the selection panel said 'what are you doing' and he said, 'what do you mean?'. And it goes back to it.

R Laughing … I've not heard anything as blatant as that.

B It did happen. I was told the circumstance

R That's shocking

B No, there's no sense. And it is that you can sit, you can now sit at a table, even of academics, and they will be there, beavering away with their laptops now. Or their phones. And the discussion is sort of going and people are off doing their own things. At it happens at company meetings, I've talked to CEOs. Who said, 'I expect it of my people to do it. They've got to be on top of these things.' So you've got students, children, up in the middle of the night. Oh the other thing is, there's all this anger about 'you didn't respond to my text.' They expect if they send a text, they expect to get an immediate response. And so …it's in my view schizophrenic .

R I think it's schizophrenic too, and you have to worry about the quality of the engagement.

B So this is where the ADHD…sorry I've digressed.

R But it's an important point because you have it in lecture theatres too and where you've got students sitting

B The international students are texting, particularly if they are texting in their own language, where does that lead. There is a student responsibility about becoming competent in English, and that is about ….then the question is, if the student actually wants to be in an English speaking environment, the only way to become competent in a language is to immerse yourself in the language. If you go to another country and you stay in your own language, you are never going to improve your skills, and that may be the case with the student you are talking about.

R And in fact, no, no the student I was talking about before is definitely not so. But I do have another one, and my opening line in her chapter is, she's lead a very Chinese life since she came to Australia. and she has, it's a good point, and it's well made, because it's absolutely so.

B And they pay the price.

R And then that's the whole question of integration again. How do you facilitate the integration so that they can actually participate as a member of community and don't run back to their own language community at every opportunity?

B And in a sense the only way is if you have the college system in America, and everyone is 'in college' for those three years.

R Let's talk about permanent residence, because all the students in my case study came to Australia with the express purpose of gaining PR but now the government keeps changing the rules. Have you seen any impact on universities as a consequence of this changing migration policy. Is that what's affected the numbers for example over the past couple of years.

B Well there are several aspects to this. When Australia first sought, I would say at least the first ten years, international students, for the first ten years the rules were, beyond the first ten years, the first fifteen years, the rules were that if, if you were seeking to gain permanent residency you wouldn't get in as a student, and the rules were also that you had to go home for two years after your degree before you could reapply to come. And basically it was the case that if a student put in their application to the government, that I want to come

and become an Australian citizen, they were knocked back. That was not what it was about. It was about your coming, paying your money, getting your degree, going home to your own community. There was a kind of Australian responsibility to see that people returned home to improve their home nation. That was the altruism of it. The other was we don't want migrants through this means. Then that all changed in about, I don't know, late, the second half of the first decade of this century, the government decided look, here is this huge resource. We need skilled migration, we have these students, the people who'd been here, they'd come as students, they'd been here three, four, five years. They understand Australia. They're integrated into Australia. Why wouldn't we want them as citizens? So then, what you're talking about, is they got extra points and were moved up the skilled migration thing, tree. Then the government decided it would meet whatever were the specific skills needs and this is where you got all these extra points for pastry cooks, hairdressers, pastry cooks. (thumping the table for emphasis) Now they, the government was warned by the universities, 'this will play havoc' and the government didn't listen and then it did play havoc and then of course, as is always the case, the government blames the industry. And in fact it was the other way around. A well as that, it said that Adelaide, the Minister I think was from Adelaide, so Adelaide became regional and you got extra points if you went to Adelaide. And so on. There were these sort of distortions came in. Then when it all blew up, it's now swung back the other way and it's given us a , it's destroyed that confidence that you're talking about from the student point of view. Now that's the government/slash industry problem that hasn't done Australia…and what

R Hasn't done Australia?

B No, and what happened was, if you took the university education numbers were going up like this, half the number of university students was the technical, vocational education, and English language supporting both was sort of here as well. Then what happened was, suddenly you had vocational education rising like that to equal universities, because all the hairdressers, pastry cooks etcetera, English language went up in the same, then when the chop came, things collapsed, and then you get the collapses of colleges, the collapses of English language colleges, all the damage that that does to us overseas, and of course universities have suffered as well.

R So what sort of dialogue do you have with the government? …do universities have with the government about these migration issues, as they pertain to international education?

B The only dialogue is through individual universities and through Universities Australia, the peak bodies association, which was never, it was never a committee of TAFE and the universities and the schools and the English language etc. It was an affiliation which was able to speak to government. That hasn't existed for a long time.

R Alright, there was one, I mean, there've been … I'm just looking here, there was a question. There's been another change, and responsibility now for students not defaulting, now rests back with universities instead of being with government. What's the implication of that….you're aware of that?

B Well obviously they created that fund but then it was underfunded…

R The fund, sorry?

B Well there was a fund if there were colleges, any students could have their fees refunded if they weren't able to do their course.

R No, sorry, a new change the government has introduced now, relating to how government visas are issues. And now the responsibility

B Oh for issuing the visa….the facts behind the visa are now with the university, aren't they?

R What sort of impact is that going to have? How will universities respond to that?

B I haven't known about it – I haven't considered it.

R Alright, nearly there.

B I'm a failed retiree….both laughing

R Impact on universities. Is it fair to say universities are now dependent on international education for funding

B Yes
R Could they manage without it
B No
R What would happen if they had to manage without it.
B Well they would be very different institutions from what they've become.
R Describe how they would be
B Well I don't know how they'd maintain their infrastructure, their staffing levels, their research capacity, etcetera. Because, if you go back to, what was it called, I mean all funding, if you go back before the doors were opened in '87, all funding of universities came from the government, apart from any little bit that they got. Now they gave away their intellectual property. They didn't think to sell it. Not like now. And of course there was research funding, but that wasn't large. It was called the universities' … I can't remember, but it had three words in it….Universities'…there was a government Quango that ran everything and was responsible for handing out money to universities. And the universities have, in real terms, the universities have, sorry the government has been reducing funding, and then of course it brought in HECS, so the students pay for a lot of it. And the amount of money, the universities could not run on the amount of money they get from the government to support the education of Australian students, or even from HECS.
R And the international education funding supports the domestic funding as well?
B All the discretionary funding comes through the international students
R So it must cause universities a little bit of heart flutter when you see numbers declining.
B No, no…. yes, universities are really concerned about and what you've seen with the cuts that are occurring in universities across the place, Sydney university for example, Newcastle and other universities, Macquarie as well, of course, is that the costs, built in through wage levels going up basically by three, three and a half, four percent per annum for academics and other staff and the government holding the funding for Australian students basically at the same level. The only thing is through the international, the only way in which they can hope to cope with that, or the way they have coped, is through the international student revenue but with that falling because of the government regulations and changes we've been talking about, and the high dollar etc, and competition from America. Obama has now, after 9/11, Australian benefitted from America very much closed its doors and became insular in relation to international students, it's now opened it up and wants the revenue, and it's very hard to compete with America. That's all made it very difficult, and hence the cutting of staff and the cutting of services.
R Mmm, which
B And the other thing is of course unlike America, Australia is not a place where philanthropy has any great effect.
R I think we've covered some of these questions but I want to just come back, to this question of trying to balance resources. What's the impact of competing pressures? I mean on one hand you've got the revenue pressures, on the other hand I think you've got particularly with large numbers of Chinese students and the notion that they are passive receivers of education is fallacious, obviously. They're very demanding and they feel they buy a product and they expect an outcome. So how do you….
B Mmm, mmmm. Well one of the problems is international students 'I've paid my fees, I deserve my degree' is a problem.
R Yes, it very much is a problem. How do you manage? How do you balance those competing pressures. And the content academics say to me, they're under pressure. They feel they have to dumb down their courses. This has been a thread that's come through so many of the interviews. They're dumbing down their courses, they're under pressure to change their assessment methods so international students can pass.
B Well, there's been a lot of movement to, tick the box answers, what do you call it?
R Multiple choice
B Multiple choice

R Or multiple guess
B Which doesn't really test the skills and …
R Given your business background, you must have a real sense of this, you know managing the revenue but also this you know, you've got to do more for students, you've got to provide more, you've got to give PD to academics, you've got to give all this welfare support to international students.
B And I think there is the other side; I think there is the entry point. That you need to ensure that students only are admitted to the best of your capacity, the students are ….to actually achieve the outcome they're seeking, and which the university will allow, will allow to occur. And that I have to say, the way I put this is in relation to Australian students. That you have some universities who will allow in students who, sorry. Let's take universities that have a 35% failure rate in first year. What they have actually done is to allow in students from almost invariably lower socio economic groups who've incurred a HECS debt, who are then you know, at the time at which they're wanting to, to buy a car, look forward to marrying, look forward to buying home, look forward to raising children, and they are incurring a debt without any capacity to get the degree that is supposed to bring them At the higher income for which they've done the thing…and for which they've enrolled. And that is occurring in every state. And so the same question that you're asking can be asked of universities, and can be asked in relational to those. Why haven't they said you need to go and do this academically before you can get in. And that has to do with taking in whatever quota they wish to take, and they just keep. You talked of dumbing down. They have a published, and this is true of all universities, they have a published … whatever it's called now but then they have second round, and then they have third round, and then they have alternative entry and they have this and so on. All to get the numbers to support the university that the government money….and they've played the same game with international students. That's what you were talking about with one particular student, and there's where the problem lies. If anybody stuck to the standard and said, 'this is what we will take', they'd be smaller universities but …
R But they need the revenue. So that's the balance
B Well the revenue is not going to come from the government. ".
R And that comes back to the language question too. That it's in the universities'…we know that these pathway programs let students in without a capacity to understand a lot of what's going on. So is there a solution?
B Um, I think the solution is , I think things are a lot better now than they may have been, in relation to support services. I think probably there are good, much better in terms of published entry standards, the whole question is whether the reality matches the well, the parameters that have been set and your experience, what you're getting from the other side is that it doesn't. And another question inn with the students in your cases, we really need to talk about their responsibility for becoming competent in language, in their subjects, in their content or are they just allowing life to happen around them. And that was true of a lot of the students when we were.
R And I can tell you about my five students
B and I went to university, and only the top 5%, fewer than the top 5% went to university.
R And now, just about anyone can take a place in university.
B What about all the bright girls in your year?
R Yes, I was one. Both laughing
B Sue was another
R Exactly, exactly.
B (rhetorically) You know, you wanted to become a secretary, paint your nails and wear a pretty dress, because you were told that was ….
R Because that was your choice
B You take my mother. Third at, she came third in the scholarship. I sat under her name in the big room, 1927. A home boy actually topped, by the way, and went on to university. Whereas in our day, all the home boys, the moment they turned 14, they suddenly whish, out

of school. They were all sent off to do a trade. But if you take that, you know, if you …Sue finished at junior. She should have done senior. She was absolutely as capable as. To go to university. You too.

R It took me a while.

B But no, Mum had to leave work when she married. And Mum was smarter than anyone she ever worked for.

R She certainly was

B And she corrected their grammar and …mmm. So, things have, I mean so many things have changed for the better, and we are, and we are a much better society for having …..there's a whole other side.

R And that's a side that we haven't talked about.

B And this society would not run. Just like America, they complain about the Mexicans, the place wouldn't run. New York, everywhere. Who's cooking the food, who's serving you, who's doing all the work, who's running, who runs the 7-11. The Indians. Who runs the garages? They're all Indians. Who drives the taxis? They're all students. By the way DIMA, DIMIA, whatever they call them now, did a raid in Melbourne this is about five years, and a third of all taxis were off the road the following road, and the taxis just screamed, so they gave up. The students are all exceeding their hours. And that's another thing you need to ask. How many hours they work?

R Considerably more than 20, mostly.

B Well, and if they're doing that

R And working for Chinese bosses who are paying them half the rates, mostly.

B And they are working the hours when they go to university they are tired.

R I think we've come to the end,

B OK. So I don't know where the …all the…it's a complex issue.

R Hugely complex. Is there anything you want to add that I

B I would simply say that there is a student responsibility, an agent responsibility, if the agents seeking to get the student to come to Australia solely by emphasizing the work side, this isn't what the university institutions want. There is a student responsibility, an agent responsibility, a university responsibility, a government responsibility, and we've talked about that, and then the individual academic responsibility as well.

R And when all those things come together, we'll do it beautifully.

B Well, that's right. But the pressure's on everyone is so great that the students are time poor, the academics are time poor, the universities are resource poor, other institutions the same.

R We can't live without it. Damned if we do, damned if we don't.

B But they're all, I mean the positive that can come out is they're all grappling with the situation.

R And that is the positive, isn't it. That the grapple is conscious of it, aware of it. Thank you very much.

Interview with Michael, PVC International … University.

M One of the biggest issues that I'll send you advice about is student support services and it has changed dramatically and it hasn't just changed dramatically for international students, it's changed for the whole university. And a thing called (student strategy) is part of a whole, we call it a (uni) strategy, and I'll send all this. And the (uni)strategy is about student support and the student links part of it is where we foster integration between Aussie domestic students, so we've got these three young people who run it, and they not only integrate with international and domestic students in the university, but they integrate with the community. So for example, they see you're an international and I'm a domestic and all we're going to do, they see we are both interested in the environment, so they form a relationship with the local creek people who look after the creek and they go and clean the creek and study the fish and changes, so we do things where there's integration between domestic and international, and they integrate with the community. So there's a sort of triangular.
R Which is one of the issues; the ghettoization of Chinese students
M Oh yeah, and I'll talk about that
R Can I just start by saying that I've got some questions here
M OK we'll do the questions
R So if I ask you the questions and you can add or expand, and if you don't think they're relevant tell me.
M Good
R , so just starting off with some housekeeping issues. What percentage of your student cohort are international.
M 25.
R 25. And how many of those are Chinese, do you think?
M Now the definition of Chinese. You're implying?
R Mainland
M Mainland. Pausing…..Of the 11000….probably just close to 3
R 3%
M Three thousand
R Which is what sort of?
C It's about 18% I think. It's certainly our highest cohort, and I don't think you'd find a uni in Australia where it isn't.
R Well I haven't yet. Alright. How does … market itself to international students? I mean your unique selling proposition, I suppose. Because it's competitive?
M Yeah. Well, we first thing we do now which we didn't do until the last couple of years is and it's become a crucial factor is world rankings, and to start to scholarship bodies around the world to give presentations. So rankings are critical. So it puts us in the top five percent of universities in the world and we are always now have to mention that. So we do that but basically if I ask for one particular way that we market ourselves, we pick our spikes, things we are world class at, and we push those.
R And what are they?
M Well for example, in China, Peking University and us as well as Qinghua and Peking and a whole range, but Peking University is an example, were we said in Applied Linguistics and in Special Education, and in facial surgery, we are outstanding. So we've never tried to go to Peking Uni and do a sort of a ..universal .. now only in the last two weeks we've done it, but for the last five or six years we had a, in those three areas, had a research grants we did together, we do post docs together, we do double degrees in applied linguistics together, so it would be absolutely pointless to say, hey we're Griffith, you're Peking, let's do a double degree. I mean the first time we signed the first agreement with them, they'd had Harvard in the day before,

in the Grand Ballroom, the famous room where they plotted the 1949 revolution, and they knocked Harvard back because they thought Harvard was a bit arrogant, and the next day we signed an agreement. So there's no way we can get in the door of a Peking University without saying, look, we're not a G8, we're a second tier university, in terms…but in these areas we're worth a pass. So with Peking, those ones, Applied Linguistics, Special Ed. And facial surgery. so in those areas. So we've always pushed, and some of those might change. For example, in Western Europe and Scandinavia, our expertise in the environment is far more important. In Korea and Taipei, our outstanding work in creative and performing arts is important. So overall there's probably 8 to 10 areas but we work out … so our strong strategy has been pick what we're world class at, and that services as a hook. When they find they like what we do they go, 'hey how are you going in business?' Why don't we use that? So we sort of use our spikes as a hook.

R You just mentioned business. Would that be the biggest faculty? In terms of numbers?

M Yeah, the same as everywhere.

R Same as everywhere. OK. Can you describe – it's a broad question – can you describe your university's philosophy in terms of international education?

M Philosophy in international education? Well, I think you wouldn't have spoken to any university that hasn't said they want to internationalize their university. When I became the international director International in 1997, John Hay had been vice-chancellor and he was there for a couple of years and he said 'we're a regional university. Like, we get kids from the country and we get kids from Brisbane, mainly the Western suburbs. We've got to broaden our outlook.' And so the opportunity to broaden your outlook in curriculum, in student services, in teaching methods, in engagement with the community, in learning. One of the things we value is we had to change the way we talk. So for example, with AUSAID students. AUSAID students come to us and they are from a developing country and they have a scholarship from their country and they've got a job to go back to. So their money's been paid and they've got a job to go back to. And we used to teach, say in urban planning, ten to fifteen years ago, we'd teach about Brisbane urban planning. And they'd sit there from Semarang in Indonesia, and Shanghai and they'd say, 'this is totally irrelevant to us. We don't want to know about Brisbane,' and our academics go, 'oh'. So they changed their curriculum, and they then taught, 'these are the principles of urban planning. Now you've all got projects. You all go back to your country and had to do a presentation'. So the Vietnamese student did this, and the Shanghai student did this, and the Indonesian who got flooded all the time in Djakarta, and it changed the whole way we taught. And what happened, when they went back, they went back with solutions for their problems. So it wasn't teaching Brisbane urban planning. So if we hadn't internationalized, if we hadn't got those students they've would have said, 'excuse me. In Djakarta it floods every week of the year. Three years ago 380 people drowned and this January, 27. What the hell is this about'. And that's when the most wonderful thing about it is we learned from them even though we are supposed to be the dispensers of knowledge. But we changed dramatically the way we actually teach. And the Aussies went, 'wow, this is interesting.' So they went and started to do an internship or an exchange and came back, whew this is totally different. I've forgotten the original question.

R It was about the philosophy

M Yeah, so you know we I think the opportunity to change ourselves has been one of the biggest philosophical differences that we now have compared with 20 years ago. We've changed ourselves. And the other thing is it's taught us to engage with the community differently. Now I spend my time talking to ethnic groups and I go along to the mosque on the gold coast and I talk to the police liaison officer, the one who looks after international students, and I talk to different people. Instead of just going to Coles and lawyers and stuff I would normally do, I engage with the community in quite different ways because of , so I've become much more, rather than, 'this is our university', it's now much wider. And a different engagement. And I don't know if that's philosophy as such.

R Well I think it's underpinning philosophy isn't it? And how you do conduct your business in relation to education.
M I'd like to come back to that question too about your academics and how they respond too in another section, but if I can just ask, and it's a follow on question, how you see your responsibilities to international students.
Interruption: Come in Kerry and say hello. Better turn that recorder off.
Rerecording….
M … is reasonably unusual in that we are very centralist. For example my colleague at …, he has about 9 staff and they just do marketing. He does other things, obviously, but I have English language, we have projects international projects, we have marketing, we have study abroad, we have admissions, we have international student support, trans-national, so Griffith. And also we teach, through the English Language College and our languages, we run the whole English Language Enhancement Program. So it's usual, it's proved unusual in that anything to do with international is in our bailiwick.
R In your portfolio. That is unusual. I'll cut out some of these questions because I am mindful of the time. If we can just talk about student integration, because I've found that that's a big one with my students. They come here
M Ghettoization
R Indeed. You talked about how this university is making sure that students have some peer mentoring, I suppose, and that you are also making sure they integrate into the broader community.
M In the areas they're interested in. So they they're offering in the ethnic groups in the community, but what this is, some are interesting in for example AFL so we have 44, around there, students, international and domestic students who are being trained to be AFL umpires. Others have enjoyed the wild mob in environmental campaigning. So we don't do it in this particular program, is based on integration within and outside the community. I mean I'll send you all the stuff on it. The whole study. But it was because as you know, kids come here and if they don't get into residency, one of the biggest problems, that we have, that North America and North Asia don't have, is they've put accommodation on campus, so they have to integrate. What we do, not many can go on campus, and the Canadians are in their flats there, and the Koreans go into their flats there, and here on Nathan campus ….it's little Chinatown. So they can end up their English gets worse. We have some research on that too.
R I'd love you to send me that.
M When Ross (?) Birrell put out his research saying that , I forget the percentage now, I think it was about 4 years, saying about 40% of students who meet our English language standards in Australia, when they, these are the ones who seek immigration, 30 to 40 percent of them their English language begets worse. And we did a study and I can send that to you. And ours was quite positive, in part because we had a very diversified. Denise Bradley when she did our review of us said we were the most diversified university in Australia.
R When was that review?
M Five years ago, that one. And I'm about to get the last one. She did it before she became famous. But she was a fearsome reviewer. But I could get that review. I can get our response to the Birrell report, I can get Student Links, which is the integration strategy and I can get the Bradley , I think I can, it wouldn't be confidential, the Bradley Review of GI.
R Well I can treat it…
M That's okay. So I'll get those three. So, those, we realized that it's a significant problem for Australian education, not just us, and that's why we started the whole. And we also do the ISB, the international student barometer, have you heard of that?
R No
M Well, international student barometer, I could send you a copy of it. Because what it does it lets international students anonymously who in the university or just left telling us what they think about us.
R So it's a qualitative study?

M Yeah yeah. So the research shows they never meet any Aussies. So I'll get that one that mentions that, and what we did about it.
R That would be very interesting, thanks. I mean it's interesting point about students' language deteriorating. I had one student in my study who came with a 5.5, she did a hospitality diploma, working in hotels, an undergrad in accounting, master's in finance at the University of New South Wales and left with a 5.5. She missed her international cutoff an is now back working at a bank in China
M Oh no
R It was tragic actually. B
C Well part of our English language, we also realized, partly in response to the Birrell report, we've instituted a whole of university English language enhancement strategy for international and domestic students and that is, even though you've met our standards unless you're from Scandinavia you've got to do this part embedded in our curriculum.
R And it's a credit subject?
M Yeah yeah. But one of the things we done, we've got an exit test so we can test them , have them done a Birrell, and also when they do well, they say to their employer, 'look not only did I get it, but here's my English language, internship, here's the exchange I went on, here's the volunteering. And here's my English language. And we've got before they get here a special course, to when they leave a test.
R I mean this whole question of students coming here though. (Your university) asks for a minimum 6.5?
M 6.5 undergrad, it was 6 for postgrad. Last we had decided to go to 6.5 for postgrad from 2015.
R Why was it lower for post-grad?
M Sorry, sorry I got that ….6.5 for post grad, 6 for undergrad. So we put undergrad to 6.5 at 21015.
R OK, so it's still a six at the moment. OK I didn't know that. I thought it was 6.5
M No, 6 and 6.5. And I think we'll be going to 7 for IELTS for PhD's in about 2016.
R Alright, the big issue from what I'm looking at so far is that students come with a 5, or a 5.5, and they go and do some language studies often in an academy that's associated with the university, they do English testing obviously when they walk out the other end, but it's really not an apples and apples comparison. So they can come into a university still, as my student did after doing her language studies at Macquarie, still with a 5.5 so she hadn't progressed in her 10 weeks of language studies, and she was at 5.5 presumably all through. I mean, these pathway programs let students come in with less than the standard.
M Well one of the things about pathways programs, Navitas, the reason Navitas has been such a great success but is now currently struggling is that they took students who didn't meet our English language and or academic standards and they still taught first year curriculums, they still went into second year, but the point is they missed having to do an English language barrier. And that's why they go in to do it. So the pathway issue, well see at ……. 82% of our students come through a pathways. Now we have these standards, but in a real sense say they come from TAFE they don't have to do an English language. If they come from Navitas. Now 82% of our students, and we aren't unusual except GO8 are different, but the second tier universities, Wollongong, Macquarie and the … and RMITs, QUTs and Griffith, they're all pretty similar. It's a major issue.
R So why don't universities toughen up and say you must do another IELTS test after you come through a language program or a pathway program? Why isn't it?
m I can tell you. Because the director of Navitas said if you do that, you'll kill us.
R Yeah, but you're telling me things about (your university) which are fabulous because I haven't heard this about, in other universities, where I've done some work, but you know, you're killing the students when you let them in with a 5 or a 5.5.
M Well, that's true. For Navitas, 5.5 they do a year's diploma ad we made them do two subjects in English language. But we've also got some interesting research in what happens to the pathways students. It's really confidential. At least we can ..we now have facts, are we

looking after students properly or not, and we've identified that because we started the whole English language enhancement, because the market place wouldn't let us put it up too fast. And I can tell you Robyn, even the universities that say they take 6.5, we have absolute evidence that they are letting in people lower than us.

R Yeah I know that to be so. I know that to be so.

M So, my attitude was recognize the issue, but if we did it and we actually honoured what we said we did, we'd lose so many students. So we said, go with the market, but put in an English language enhancement that Australia recognizes is the best inn Australia is what we are doing.

R And make it a credit point subject and make it compulsory.

M Yeah, make it compulsory.

R Although, one of your teachers in the program has told me that there's a frustration because it's not always attended….

M The lectures aren't always attended. And this is another interesting trend.

R And that the assessment again, isn't the apples and apples assessment. It's a step but it isn't….

M Well you'd need to believe that that teacher because they…but what we're finding too is the lecturers are run by the academic element, the tutes are run by us. They to go the tutes because they get marks. You don't get marks if you aren't there. But one time, we had one of the lectures who was writing an email, she said, you might be surprised but I did this in my lecture time because no one turned up' and there's a major change happening in Australian universities and this is why universities are moving to blended learning where the lecturer is quite common for a lecturer to stand up and there might only b 5 kids in a 100 hall, but it's now streamed, so international kids, even a lecturer with a Scottish accent, a lecturer talking fairly fast, they keep up with those. So the move to blended learning…kids don't come to lectures.

R Blended learning. Just explain that concept.

M Blended learning. Well you're giving a lecture, it's recorded and it's available to students. So they say it's better for me not to travel in on the bus for half an hour an half an hour back, it's better for me to sit there, have it streamed so I can access that. Replay that. Take better notes, turn up to the tutes and we've got to do that. So I am not sure the one you talked to is a tutor from GELI or a lecturer, but there's been a massive change in the way that students don't come to lectures. Not not in medicine or in the performing arts, but in the generic ones like science, business, arts, humanities. You can often get dramatically less students in a lecture.

R So is there a role then for compulsory attendance….to go back to compulsory…

M Well unis won't do that because we're universities, we're not schools. (note: inconsistent…what about compulsory tutorials??)

R It's been put to me by one of the students though, one of my international students who came to … and did extremely well you'll be pleased to know on both his under grad and post grads, full of praise, but he said, 'I've got friends who never go, because they've come from this environment where they are so regulated….

M I know, I know

R 'they come here and they just think, wow this is heaven. And they don't go. They don't turn up. But he argues….

M But do another question though….did they access the lectures. Now maybe they didn't.

R Maybe they did too….

M Now I don't particularly mind as long as you've got strategies for integration. Now you don't want to international kids who never come. They miss out on the whole other experience. But if you have these other strategies I don't mind if they don't turn up. Now I've been to lectures – have you been to lectures lately? They may be great academics, but that doesn't mean they're great teachers and so therefore if they, and I've taken notes like you have in courses and it's hard to take notes, listen, take notes in English language. If it's your

second language. Whereas if I'm sitting in my lounge room I can play it back and play it forward, and stop it. So I actually, as long as you've got these other strategies.

R Yeah, what they're missing out on is that opportunity to integrate and the opportunity to build language by watching and learning. So, I mean the other thing that I would say is they come through the pathways, one of the things that happens, is happening now in universities, they seem to be putting in these post English language assessment. So students come in, everyone knows they don't have the IELTS score that they're meant to have, then they do the PELAS, and then the universities are scratching, finding resources to actually action some of the findings from the PELAS. But it's sort of closing the stable door isn't it?

M Look I tell you, it sounds dreadful, it's market reality, it's stopping Australian unis from doing what. If actually, if everybody actually enforced the standards they say they have, they wouldn't have students. That's why they students. So that's why they start to do catch up. We've done compulsory stuff which we got academics to change their curriculums. That sounds easy but it was very difficult . Take that out. You've only got 24 subjects but you've got to fit this one in. And we are now just doing it with post-grad. We've worked out a way of doing it with post grad. too. But it took two years to do that, of negotiating.

R It sort of it, my marketing background would say, I can see the point of that, that you have to compete and so that's everyone does it, we have to do it too. But at the end of the day if you've got a student who comes through a program, can't get permanent residence because his language isn't good enough, or gets through, as my boy did, with a really good IELTS score, wants to be an accountant, can't get a placement. So, he's saying now, what was the point? I've spent $120,000, what was the point. He's selling mobile phones. And he got an IELTS 7.5 I think.

M And he can't get a job as an accountant?

R He can't get a start as an accountant.

M That's unusual, one of my sons he's a banker, and he worked for a time with accountancy firms, and they had two …. graduates, international students, and he said one was fantastic and the other one was a disaster, and he said there was a genuine view in this accounting firm at least that English language is so bad they can't write …..

R That's right.

M And they don't want to hire them. But with an IELTS 7.5

R And an 8, 8.5 He fell down on the writing, he got a 6.5 and that dragged him down.

M But better than a lot of Aussies

R Oh hell yeah. And he goes into the big 4 to try to get a start and what have you, and they've got their own English language testing. See they don't trust what's coming out of the testing.

M Where is he based?

R Gold Coast.. He did his master's here, master 's of finance.

M But where is he living.

R He's living on the Gold Coast.

C You should write to me with his CV. Our finance people are always looking for accountants.

R Look I'd really speak highly for this young man.

M I'll get him an interview with the director, or the deputy director of Finance. That will get the door open.

R That would be brilliant.

Because if you get 5.5 and you're an accountant ……..but ……..said one … graduate was brilliant, and the other one was a great accountant but he couldn't write. So they sort of said, mmm, international students. You know they are thinking about changing the SOL, the special points given to accountancy.

R Yes, I think that happened on 1 July.

M Well get him to write to me.

R Already, his name's …, or James s his English name is. I'll certainly ask him to do at.

M Selling mobile phones? I'm sure that's a good job, but….

R As I said I'm going to skip some questions but we don't have much time.

OK it's been put to me that instead of leaving the language counselling to the academic language and learning advisers as so often happens, it has to be integrated into teaching and learning and that content academics should have a responsibility for language development. Is that something you agree with?

M That's part of our strategy. I agree with that, because if language is seen as remedial, if a lecturer says, 'oh you've got a problem go over there', that sends entirely the wrong message and as part of our strategy is to run courses for academics, because the hidden curriculum for us is to reach the academics how to do it, so they don't see them as the problem kids over there.

R so you're running courses for academics. I mean, that's my next question. What's required to ensure content academics are more mindful of the international nature of their classes, both their language and the broader cultural issues? You addressed that a bit before.

M Well it's sort of voluntary these language things, it's not compulsory. I guess it's for the ones who are saying, 'look I'm struggling a bit here.' We do, well it's not just for them. But to answer your question, we don't have a university wide, ever body. Higher Ed, they do run courses about how to teach international students, and I can get you information about that, but I think that's new teachers, I don't think someone our age who's been teaching, I don't think they've ever been taught how to teach international. But the ones we run under the strategy, we specifically give them skills on how to teach international students, which is very often the case how to teach domestic too.

Because……..

R Look can I give you the example my Griffith student gave me. He said he was at the Gold Coast and did his undergrad in accounting, loved it, got fabulous support, academics, he couldn't speak highly enough of it. When he came to do his masters and what he said to me was, 'Robyn I've spent 3 years learning how Australian education works. You know I have my lecturers say to me, I'm not going to give you the answer, I'm going to tell you how to find the answer'. He said and I loved it and I really took it all onboard. And then he said I came to do my masters and I was taught by Chinese who said do have, this is what is likely to be on the paper. And that was the approach. So you do have, not just in Griffith

M That's in …?

R Yeah, that was in ….. Also I was talking to Macquarie about this self-same things. Because they have a lot of accountants who come from overseas because they are looking for teachers with PhDs, and not many accountants have that, and she said it was real issue in Macquarie, they're struggling to help the teachers teach.

M Look, I don't, that's not my area.

R But it must impact on the work that you do, if your academics are ….

M Absolutely. That's why the bit I control, we do teach academics how to do it. But it's not compulsory. What is compulsory is this thing where there is ….on it, but what we find when we run the courses 50 academics turn say hey I need some help. But I guess there are those gaps.

R Which is just a time issue?

M Possibly the worst ones are the ones who don't go and get extra help. And who should. But I know…Even if we do have teachers being assessed and there would be an analysis of teacher questionnaires and someone should say hey Robyn you need to go and get help. But I don't know about that.

R I'll have to talk to … about that. I'm conscious of your time. Do you have time for a couple of questions? Students in my case study all came here with the express purpose of getting an education but the predominant reason was to get permanent residence, and the migration policy has changed and changed and changed. Has that impacted on student enrolments here?

M Absolutely. We went a thousand Indian students to 400 after the Melbourne bashing. Particular markets are particularly keen to migrate and when the Government used the sledge hammer instead of a scalpel it had a dramatic drop in some Indonesian, in Chinese, in Indian

enrolments. India in particular but there are other issues. I've estimated the market, there are 20% of our market of international students want to migrate, so it's a large part of our market. My view is, if you are looking at who makes good Aussies if you find kids who have lived here for 3 years, they've integrated into Australian communities, they like us because they want to become Australians, they're educated, and they've paid us to do it. Where would we get better migrants? And yet the Federal Government says you've got to break this link between education and student visas. And even

Universities say you shouldn't do that. I don't get that. There's no better migrants than those educated here, who know us and like us. And they're integrated and they want to be Aussies. I don't get that. So on the Chaney committee that I'm on, I've fought this battle. But there's still this view from DIAC that you should, and see DIAC, have you heard of the double genuine test.

R No

M There's a double genuine test. You've got to prove you're a genuine student, and you are genuinely TEMPORARY.

And I've said,' this is crazy'. We want PhD graduates to come and become Australian, and you have to sign a document saying you are going to be temporary. And that breaks this connection between migration and student visas. The problem for me is the new head of education who is going to be looking at the Chaney report has just come from the minister of education Chris Bowen. We can't t pin this….I don't get the thing against boat people. This weird Australian boat people. There's more come on planes. But maybe we were convicts we came on boats.

R And it's certainly different from when Vietnamese came on boats.

M Exactly. Bipartisan. Wonderful leadership from Fraser. All …..

R Now it's nasty, ugly, introspective I agree with you.

M As an Australian it's scary stuff. So the issue of breaking this link is an issue that Julia Gillard brought in and it's providing exceptionally difficult to say these are the best migrants we can have.

R Too the notion that permanent resident applicants no longer get points for doing higher degrees. That makes no sense.

M That changed that again too. Julia Gillard changed it. I'm a Labor voter too by the way. But I, the things she did as education minister, phew. I've got to go. Can we make another appointment, because. …Look what I'll do, I'll send you all these things, and when you get it all you may want to come back. I'm happy to do it.

INTERVIEWEES

STUDENTS

Crystal
Alice
Penny
James
Daisy

ACADEMIC LANGUAGE AND LEARNING ADVISERS

Catherine
Heather
Bryan
Tanya

DISCIPLINE ACADEMICS

Professor Peter
Ian
Sarah

PRO-VICE CHANCELLORS (INTERNATIONAL)

Simon
Robert
Michael