

**From pre-course expectations to subsequent  
learning experiences: A study of Confucian-  
heritage international students' perspectives on  
an intensive English course in one New Zealand  
polytechnic**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Education  
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## **DECLARATION**

**Name of candidate:** Lee Mui Choong

This Thesis entitled **From pre-course expectations to subsequent learning experiences: A study of Confucian-heritage international students' perspectives on an intensive English course in one New Zealand polytechnic** is submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of Master of Education.

### **CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION**

I confirm that:

- This Thesis represents my own work
- Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

Research Ethics Committee Approval Number: **2012-1053**

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## ABSTRACT

This research explores the pre-course expectations of a cohort of Confucian-heritage international students from China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan who were attending a 10-week Certificate of Intensive English (CIE) course in one New Zealand polytechnic (pseudonym Kia ora Polytechnic). The study also investigates factors influencing pre-course expectations, and whether the students' subsequent experiences in New Zealand match their pre-course expectations.

The research uses a qualitative-interpretivist methodology. The study involves face-to-face interviews with the participants and uses semi-structured questions to elicit in-depth narratives. Interview data are analysed, similar responses are categorised and reported as themes of the findings.

Research findings reveal that parents paid the tuition fees and living costs of most of the participants. Most participants had not travelled out of their home countries and they expected New Zealand to be like information from tourist brochures: a country that is clean, green, safe and friendly, and they expected to be happy living and studying here. They also expected quality education, good teachers, good English learning outcomes, and making friends with Kiwi people. All the participants reported that their English proficiency had progressed to a level that far exceeded their pre-course expectations. Most participants had positive experiences but were unable to make friends with Kiwi people. Coming to New Zealand entailed a lot of planning. Parents and education agents influenced participants' pre-course expectations and they indirectly shaped participants' subsequent experiences.

Unexpectedly, most participants rejected the role of Confucianism even though the participants themselves displayed many Confucian traits. This finding implies that to assume 'all things Confucius' was probably inappropriate and more research needs to be done with students from East Asian heritage.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	II
ABSTRACT .....	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	IV
LIST OF TABLES .....	VII
LIST OF FIGURES.....	VII
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .....	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
RATIONALE.....	2
RESEARCH AIM .....	2
RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	3
RESEARCH BACKGROUND.....	3
RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE .....	6
SCOPE OF THE STUDY .....	7
OUTLINE OF THESIS.....	9
CHAPTER TWO : LITERATURE REVIEW.....	11
INTRODUCTION.....	11
REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	11
CONCLUSION .....	25
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY.....	26
INTRODUCTION.....	26
METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK .....	26
STEPS IN CONDUCTING RESEARCH INTERVIEWS .....	29
PARTICIPANT SELECTION.....	34
DATA ANALYSIS .....	36
VERIFICATION STRATEGIES .....	37
ETHICAL ISSUES .....	40
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS .....	43
INTRODUCTION.....	43
PROFILE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS.....	43
THEMES FROM PARTICIPANTS' INTERVIEWS.....	44
SUBSEQUENT EXPERIENCES VERSUS PRE-COURSE EXPECTATIONS .....	55
FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO FORMATION OF PRE-COURSE EXPECTATIONS .....	60
CONCLUSION .....	64
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION .....	66
INTRODUCTION.....	66
PRE-COURSE EXPECTATIONS.....	66
SUBSEQUENT EXPERIENCES VERSUS PRE-COURSE EXPECTATIONS .....	67
FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE FORMATION OF PRE-COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND SUBSEQUENT EXPERIENCES.....	70
CONCLUSION .....	76
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS .....	78
INTRODUCTION.....	78
RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS .....	78
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS .....	79

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<b>IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS</b> .....	<b>80</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	<b>81</b>
<b>LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY</b> .....	<b>83</b>
<b>CONCLUDING COMMENTS</b> .....	<b>84</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>85</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b> .....	<b>96</b>

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## LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Profile of research participants .....	44
Table 4.2: Four themes from the research interviews.....	48
Table 4.3: Elements within the themes of ‘imagery of New Zealand’.....	49
Table 4.4: Elements within the themes of ‘imagery of New Zealand Education Institution’ .....	51
Table 4.5: Elements within the theme of ‘dreams of their learning journey’ .....	52
Table 4.6: Elements within the theme of ‘imagery of personal emotions’ .....	53
Table 4.7: Subsequent experiences versus initial expectations.....	56
Table 4.8: Different factors that influence pre-course expectations .....	61

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1 Overview of research findings .....	45
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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

CHC - Confucian-Heritage Cultures

CIE - Certificate in Intensive English

EEL - The Export Education Levy

ELP- English Language Providers

IELTS - International English Language Testing System

NZQA - New Zealand Qualification Authority

OECD - Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

PTS - Private Training Establishments

The Code - The Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of international Students

UREC - Unitec Research Ethics Committee



## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the background for the research. It explains the rationale and significance of the research, outlines the research study and introduces the research aim and research questions.

### INTRODUCTION

Every year, a large number of fee-paying students from non-English speaking countries come to attend short term English study programmes in New Zealand. Generally, they study in English language schools, polytechnics or universities. Some of these students come to improve English proficiency while some use it as a pathway to tertiary education, work and for immigration purposes (Merwood, 2007). Hence, there is a complex range of personal and external influences why they choose to study different types of English courses, in different education institutions, and in different parts of New Zealand.

This research explores a cohort of international students from China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan in one polytechnic in New Zealand. These four countries are greatly influenced by Confucian values. The researcher categorises this cohort of research participants into a collective identity of Confucian-heritage cultures (CHC) international students to reflect that they come from countries that share the commonality of Confucian-heritage. This categorisation is for the convenience of narrowing the scope of study. The researcher acknowledges that not all learning issues are related to Confucian values and not all Asian students' thinking is based on Confucian values. However, the researcher was curious to find out whether the commitment of both parents and children to education is a manifestation of the Confucian values they share.

Do these students have expectations well before they decide to study in New Zealand and are their expectations fulfilled when they are here? What factors influence their expectations and experiences? These are the questions this research has explored.

## **RATIONALE**

In New Zealand, there are many education institutions that provide short term English courses. These courses appeal to international students from different parts of the world. However, there has been limited research done on them. Therefore by examining one specific short term intensive English course in one polytechnic in New Zealand, and focusing on one cohort of international students from Confucian-heritage countries, it is hoped that the findings will fill this void in literature and create a platform for future research.

On a personal level, the researcher's interest in doing a research study on Confucian-heritage international students in the Certificate of Intensive English course at Kia ora Polytechnic came from her own Confucian-heritage background. The researcher had experience in financially supporting her children's study in New Zealand, her later experience attending an English course at Kia ora Polytechnic and living here in New Zealand.

The researcher grew up, worked and brought up her children in Malaysia. Coming from a family that follows a combination of Buddhist, Confucian and ancestor-worship practices, the researcher and her husband scrimped on many things in order to save enough money for their children's overseas education. Like most parents who share the belief that education of the child is the parents' most important duty, the researcher had good intentions for the well-being of her children and did not view it as a sacrifice. Instead, the children's commitment to study and their appreciation of their parents' contribution were enough to make her feel blessed. In 2010, the researcher attended an English course in Kia ora Polytechnic. It was an overwhelmingly positive experience for the researcher. All these experiences motivated the researcher to conduct this research because the issues investigated are near and dear to her heart.

## **RESEARCH AIM**

The aim of the research is to explore the pre-course expectations of a cohort of international students from China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan who are attending a short Certificate of Intensive English (CIE) course at one New Zealand polytechnic (pseudonym Kia ora Polytechnic). The study also investigates factors

influencing pre-course expectations and subsequent experiences, and whether their expectations are fulfilled.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The three research questions are:

1. What pre-course expectations do CHC international students from China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan have before they commence their CIE course at Kia ora Polytechnic?
2. How do these international students' subsequent experiences compare with their pre-course expectations?
3. What factors influence the formation of their pre-course expectations and subsequent experiences?

## **RESEARCH BACKGROUND**

Data show that international enrolments in New Zealand are driven primarily by interest from Chinese international students and a smaller extent by Korea and Japanese students (Ministry of Education, 2013). Data also show that fifty-two percent of international students studied English language at some point in time (Merwood, 2007) making English language the most common study sector overall. Young adult students from non-English speaking countries like China, South Korea and Japan have a propensity to study English, either on its own or as a pre-requisite to entry into higher education (Merwood, 2007). For the scope of this research, students from these countries were put into a collective category of Confucian-heritage international students because they share the commonality of Confucian background. The researcher, however, acknowledges that the categorisation is based on her own simplistic assumption that Confucian-heritage students will provide a good area for research.

Parents of Confucian-heritage background believe that education of the child is an important duty. These parents believe that New Zealand provides high quality education, while New Zealand's export education strategies have enabled education agents to recruit students from these countries. The interplay between

these push and pull factors has resulted in a significant education boom for New Zealand. In order to sustain the international education market, it is important to understand the expectations of these students and whether their expectations are fulfilled when they are studying in New Zealand. Since most Confucian-heritage international students are financially supported by their parents, it also raises the question of whether Confucian values play a role in shaping students' expectations and subsequent experiences in New Zealand.

Like other international students, CHC international students also contribute significantly to the economic returns of New Zealand export education. Since 2004, the annual economic contribution of the international education sector has registered a consistent income of over NZD two billion to the New Zealand economy (Ministry of Education, 2013). This total reflects the economic importance of export education industry to New Zealand. To help inform the export education industry, the New Zealand Ministry of Education has published a series of annual research reports and research data on international students (Ministry of Education, 2003, 2006a, 2006b, 2007a 2007b, 2011a, 2011b, and 2013). The researcher used these reports from the Ministry of Education as background to this research.

### **Confucian values**

Confucius was a Chinese philosopher born around 551 BCE. After thousands of years, Confucius philosophy continues to be studied, interpreted, critiqued and practised in some Asian countries (Kushner, 2013). China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, Singapore and Vietnam are historically influenced by Confucianism. Even now, Confucian values continue to play an active part in the modern day mind-sets and cultures of people from these countries. Some researchers (Nguyen, Griffin & Nguyen, 2006 as cited in Gutierrez, 2009) popularised the definition of Confucian-heritage cultures to refer to cultures that still believe and practise Confucian values in their everyday life, while the abbreviation of CHC students was used by (Biggs, 1996) to refer to students from Confucian-heritage cultures.

The Confucian value system is multifaceted and complex. The primary focus of Confucian values on education is that education is an important means of personal development and is desirable for the perfection of the self and the benefit of the wider society (Ho, Holmes, & Cooper, 2004). Confucian teaching reminds parents that children's education is their first duty (Yao, 2000). Children are expected to be diligent in learning while parents are expected to plan and contribute to the success of their children (Yao, 2000). Hence, parents in Confucian-heritage cultures have to assume the primary responsibility of educating and disciplining their children because their children's achievements reflect the efforts of the parents. Parents with Confucian beliefs encourage their children to pursue more quality education and many of them are willing to invest financially on their children's overseas education.

### **Export education in New Zealand**

Campbell and Li (2008) reported that more than 85% of the international students in New Zealand are Asian in origin. Among them, many students from non-English speaking Asian countries travel to New Zealand to study English. More fee-paying international students means more economic benefits for the New Zealand export education

In 2010, nearly 100,000 international fee-paying students enrolled in New Zealand education institutions (Ministry of Education, 2011a). Data from Coker (2012) show that in 2011, the average expenditure per tertiary full fee-paying student in New Zealand was NZD1,000 per week. Out of this total, 43% was on tuition fees, 41% on living expenses and 15% on other miscellaneous items. Hence, the weekly expenditure from one individual international student was 165% more than the NZD378 spent by a typical New Zealand resident each week. Data since 2004 also pointed out that total revenue collected from both tuition fees and living expenses of international students was consistently over NZD two billion annually (Ministry of Education, 2011b, 2013). These examples reveal that the collective group of full fee-paying international students has become a valuable New Zealand export earner.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) estimates that globally there are almost three million students studying in tertiary education outside their country of permanent residence (Coker, 2012). However, less than 1.5% of this total comes to New Zealand (Collins, 2010 cited in Coker, 2012). New directions in promoting New Zealand as an international education destination and more competitive strategies in recruiting international students will enable New Zealand to capture a greater share of global market (Ministry of Education, 2013; McGrath, Stock & Butcher, 2007). New Zealand's quality education is a great attraction to CHC students.

### **RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE**

Each year, thousands of international students from non-English speaking countries travel to New Zealand to attend short English courses. These students spend money on food, accommodation, transport, recreation, entertainment and many other activities. Their expenditure creates significant income for both local and national economy. This lucrative income boosts foreign exchange and contributes to the financial well-being of the educational institutions. However, data on this group of international students is limited. Data collection is challenging because many students attend private English schools, some only attend classes for a few weeks and some travel on tourist visas (Merwood, 2007).

In New Zealand, there are many English Language providers (ELPs). However, there is not much research done on individual ELPs. This research study focuses on a Certificate of Intensive English course (CIE) run by Kia ora Polytechnic. It explores a cohort of CHC international students' expectations and experiences at Kia ora Polytechnic. The results from the research will be significant for both the students, the specific polytechnic and the New Zealand export education sector. Students will be better informed and the polytechnic will be able to better understand the students.

In order to get their New Zealand students visa for the short CIE course at Kia ora Polytechnic, these students have to pre-pay hefty international tuition

fees.<sup>1</sup> Information from this research will enable Kia ora Polytechnic to design better strategies in marketing English courses to CHC students and will encourage more students to choose Kia ora Polytechnic as their study destination. When CHC international students access New Zealand education institutions, there are benefits as well as ramifications to both the international students and the education providers.

Research published by the Ministry of Education New Zealand show that international students are generally satisfied with their New Zealand experience (Ministry of Education, 2006a, 2007a; 2011e). However, there is relatively little research to study the experiences of international students in short intensive English language courses in one specific education institution. There are even fewer research studies that focus on international students from Confucian-heritage cultures. This research hopes to fill the knowledge gap in this field of study.

### **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This research explores the pre-course expectations and subsequent experiences of a cohort of Confucian-heritage cultures (CHC) international students who attend the ten-week Certificate of Intensive English course (CIE) in Kia ora Polytechnic. It also investigates factors that influence formation of their pre-course expectation.

The context of the investigation involves international fee-paying students from four countries of origin: China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan who attended the Certificate of Intensive English (CIE) course in the 2012 academic year at Kia ora Polytechnic. Data obtained from the Language Studies Department revealed that 78.5% of all international students enrolled in the CIE course came from East Asian countries. Of this total, 51% came from China, 23% from Korea, 3% from Vietnam and 1.5% from Japan (Head of Language Studies, Kia ora Polytechnic, personal communication, July 24, 2012). Hence, throughout this research, the term CHC international student is used exclusively to refer to students from these four countries.

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<sup>1</sup>In the 2012 academic year, indicative fee for CIE course at Kia ora Polytechnic is NZD385 per week

The CIE course is divided into two levels. Level 4 comprises of Beginners, Elementary, Pre-intermediate and Intermediate English. Level 5 includes both Upper Intermediate and Advanced English (Kia ora Polytechnic, 2012). When CHC international students start a CIE course, they have to sit for an English proficiency test. This test assesses students' prior English competency and matches them to the correct level of study. All levels of CIE courses are conducted on a full-time basis, within a ten-week time-frame and the indicative tuition fee is NZD385 per week (Kia ora Polytechnic, 2012, p.2).

The demographic background of CHC international students in the CIE course shows that the median age is 21 years of age. Generally, these students are single and young and most of them have just completed their high school education in their home countries. The majority of them have not begun working and are not financially independent (Head of Language Studies, Kia ora Polytechnic, personal communication, July 24, 2012).

These CHC international students come to New Zealand because it is an English-speaking country. Students attend CIE short courses to learn English language in a New Zealand environment. There are many reasons of studying English (Benzie, 2010). Some believe that English is the international language of business. Some view English as a very important lingua franca that they must learn from native speakers. Some believe that the English speaking environment of New Zealand fosters full immersion of English that would speed up and enhance their language learning experience. Some may learn English as a pathway to other courses in New Zealand. Some already have good English competency and want to improve their communication skill for employment in New Zealand. They have different and varied learning expectations.

The experiences CHC international students have while in New Zealand will impact their views and judgement of New Zealand education. Transition from CHC cultures and learning environment to New Zealand life can be smooth, uneventful or stressful. The everyday experiences they encounter while studying in New Zealand will indicate whether there is a match or a mismatch between their pre-course expectations and their actual experiences.



## **OUTLINE OF THESIS**

This thesis consists of six chapters. This chapter introduces the research rationale, aim and questions. It discusses research background and research scope. It outlines the six chapters in this research study.

Chapter Two reviews the literature associated with the main themes of this research. It examines literature on the involvement of Asian international students in New Zealand export education industry and the perceptions of international students from Confucian-heritage background. Then the pre-course expectations of students and factors influencing the formation of these expectations are presented. Finally, there is a discussion on the link between pre-course expectations and subsequent experiences.

Chapter Three discusses the methodological framework adopted in the study and provides the rationale for using a qualitative-interpretivist paradigm. It discusses the procedures in the research process, how participants are selected and how data are analysed. Following that, it outlines the importance of verification and discusses the importance of reliability, validity and triangulation. Lastly, it explains the ethical issues related to the research and how they are addressed.

Chapter Four discusses the findings from the semi-structured research interviews with nine participants. It presents the participants' profile and identifies research findings. It reports participants' interpretations of their pre-course expectations and subsequent experiences in a thematic form. Finally, factors influencing expectations are discussed.

Chapter Five discusses the significance of the research findings reported in Chapter Four. It also discusses the similarities and differences in relation to the literature review in Chapter Two. Research questions provide a framework for discussion. It discusses pre-course expectations, subsequent experiences, and factors influencing formation of pre-course expectations are discussed.

Chapter Six presents answers to the research questions. It outlines a summary of research findings. It then discusses the implications of the study, recommendations for future research and practice, and limitations of the research.

## **CHAPTER TWO : LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter reviews the research literature that is associated with the main themes in this study. Literature on the involvement of Asian international students in New Zealand's export education industry, perceptions of CHC international students, their pre-course learning expectations, factors influencing the formation of their expectations, and the match between their expectations and experiences in New Zealand are reviewed. These five main bodies of literature inform the development of this thesis.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **Involvement of Asian international students in New Zealand export education industry**

The engagement between Asian international students and New Zealand education dates back many years. In 1951, a group of Asian students came to study in New Zealand under the Colombo Plan scholarship (Butcher, 2009). By July 1961, the number of Colombo Plan Asian scholars in New Zealand had increased to 892 (Collins, 2012b). In 1989, New Zealand government changed its policy from education-as-aid to education-as-trade (Butcher & McGrath, 2011; Collins 2012b) and international students were charged partial tuition fees. By the mid-1990s, more fee-paying international students were allowed in under the new provisions to the 1989 Education Act (Marriott, du Plessis, & Pu, 2010). The Act allows institutions, public and private, to charge international students the full fee on a full-cost recovery basis (Ministry of Education, 2001). Rising fees did not deter but instead resulted in increased international enrolments. Since then, New Zealand export education industry has grown year after year, cumulating in the boom of the Asian international students in 2000 (Benson, 2006).

In 2003, there were 117,621 international fee-paying students in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2008). It was estimated that students from China (45%), South Korea (20%) and Japan (17%) accounted for more than 80% of the

international students studying in New Zealand (Education New Zealand, 2003, as cited in Collins, 2006, p.219). Hence, it can be inferred that in 2003, about 80% of international students came from countries that share the commonality of Confucian-values. In this research, for ease of research scope, they have been categorised as CHC international students.

During the recent boom years, educational institutions struggled to keep pace with the growth. Many new education institutions opened for business, but they were generally unable to provide for the needs of the new students. New Zealand communities were also not prepared for the large influx of Asian international students and many problematic interactions occurred between international students and the host population (Benson, 2006). Many locals perceived that the influx of international students, in particular Chinese international students, created a great strain on the existing New Zealand education system. The host communities were told by the news media that wealthy Chinese international students flaunted their wealth, were involved in crimes, and posed as a threat to New Zealand culture (Butcher & McGrath, 2004), while Rotherham (2003) compared the large influx of Chinese international students to a 'cultural invasion' (as cited in Butcher, 2010, p.12). Meanwhile, crimes and safety issues that gave negative coverage in New Zealand were also reported in the students' home countries (Butcher & McGrath, 2011). Huo (2007) commented that this negative news had scared off many potential Chinese international students as they suspected that New Zealand education was not creditable. This bad publicity resulted in a sharp drop in enrolments of Chinese international students (Li, 2007).

Unfortunately, the host communities often associated Chinese international students with other Asian international students, so that Asian international students appeared ubiquitous all over New Zealand. The great number of Asian international students was seen more as a nuisance, unlike when they were seen as a novelty during the Colombo Plan period (Butcher & McGrath, 2011). Even though Asian international students brought in both tangible and intangible benefits to New Zealand, often community attitudes were hostile and could be interpreted as racist. Despite the economic benefits of new money, boosted

foreign exchange, increased consumerism and creation of new jobs; many Asian international students felt unwelcomed. These perceptions impacted negatively on the experiences of Asian international students (Butcher & McGrath, 2004; Butcher, 2007; Butcher & McGrath, 2011).

For many years, the actual interplay between the Asian international students and local New Zealanders remained rocky and fraught with misunderstanding (Benson, 2006). However, data from government publications (Ministry of Education 2001, 2008, 2011a, 2013) downplayed the negatives and continued to paint rosy views of economic returns from the export education industry. The continuous decline in international student enrolments from 113,555 in 2004 to 91,392 in 2008 (Ministry of Education, 2011a) was worrying because it resulted in a decrease in revenue and lesser growth in the New Zealand export education industry (Marriot, du Plessis, & Pu, 2010).

After years of minimal regulation and several negative incidents that were published in the print media (Butcher & McGrath, 2004; Collins, 2006), the New Zealand government responded with initiatives like The Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Student in 2002 and a levy on Export Education providers in 2003 (Deloitte, 2006; Lewis, 2005; Ministry of Education, 2003; 2011c; and 2011d). All these initiatives were used to support the sustainable development of export education industry.

The Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Student (The Code) was implemented in 2002. The Code provides a framework for education providers to ensure a high standard of care and well-being is maintained for international students while they live and study in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2011c). The Code also provides quality control to standard setting, benchmarking, certification and audit (Lewis, 2005).

In 2003 the Export Education Levy (EEL) was imposed on the New Zealand export education sector. The EEL is compulsory for all institutions, private as well as public, primary, secondary and tertiary that recruit international students (Ministry of Education, 2011d). The government uses the receipts from EEL to

support education initiatives such as marketing and quality assurance, while 20% of Levy funds are channelled into the operation of The Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Student (Deloitte, 2006). There appeared to be a resigned acceptance by the export education industry to pay the EEL, but some appreciated the use of EEL into The Code (Deloitte 2006). Since the commencement of EEL, there has been no shortage of data from the Ministry of Education on the revenue collected, student enrolment and future perspectives. The big volumes of data published by the Ministry of Education from 2003 until currently tended to focus more on demographics of international students, less on the characteristics of international students and even less research on the perception of the quality of education service among international students studying English language in New Zealand.

However, these two government policies are concerted efforts to ensure better control of New Zealand export education industry and to assure international students that they will be able to obtain a good quality education in New Zealand and in a safe environment. These policies also aim to prevent further negative incidents from happening again.

As the New Zealand government confirmed new directions to support export education industry, the number of international students began to increase again, from 91,392 in 2008 to 99,880 in 2010 (Ministry of Education, 2011a). Research data predicts that by 2025, Asia will represent some 70% of total global demand of 7.2 million international students - an increase of 27 percentage points from 2000 (Bohm, David, Meares, & Pearse, 2002). It is also predicted that there will be a potential growth of 5% fee-paying enrolments for English courses in 2025 (Ministry of Education, 2011a) and New Zealand should be ready to receive more international students. The economic link between Asia and New Zealand is compellingly significant and involvement of Asian international students in New Zealand export education is important for now and in the future (Butcher, 2010).

As international education becomes increasingly competitive, the host population needs to accept that international students are important stakeholders to the New Zealand export industry. The tuition fees and living costs spent by

international students has a multiplier effect on wider economy of the rest of New Zealand (Infometrics Consulting, 2000). A decline in international student numbers will have significant negative impact on the economy. Asian international students come to New Zealand because they believe that New Zealand provides quality education, personal safety, reasonable living cost and good social life (Ministry of Education, 2012). Hostility from host communities, poor support from education institutions and portraying Asian international students as a social problem will tarnish the reputations of New Zealand education. Consequently, Asian international students are distracted from coming to New Zealand. Positive steps taken by New Zealand government have greatly improved the present image of internationalisation of New Zealand education. This research uses knowledge from the literature to inform its research questions. The researcher believes that findings from this study will add new knowledge to better understand the involvement of Confucian-heritage international students in New Zealand export education industry.

### **Confucian-heritage cultures (CHC) students**

In educational research, students from China, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and Vietnam are popularly termed as students from Confucian-heritage cultures (Biggs, 1996; Nguyen, Griffin & Nguyen, 2006 as cited in Gutierrez, 2009; Clark & Gieve, 2006). The majority of Asian international students from China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan funded their study through their family, while a minority used their own funds (Ministry of Education, 2012). International students from these four countries share the commonality that they come from countries that are still greatly influenced by the teachings of Confucius (551-479 BCE), and Confucian values still act as mediating influences on students' learning motivation and life aspirations (Tran, 2012).

Confucian value system is a set of ethical and moral rules influencing the culture in personal, familial and social relationships (Huang & Gove, 2012). In Confucian societies, the guiding principles governing socialisation of young adults are embodied in the ethics of filial piety which included obeying and honouring one's parents, providing for the material and mental well-being of one's aged parents, performing the ceremonial duties of ancestral worship, taking care to avoid harm

to one's body, ensuring the continuity of the family line, and in general conducting oneself so as to bring honour and no disgrace to the family name (Ho, 1994; Yao, 2000). Hence, CHC traditions emphasize collectivism and deemphasise individualism (Ho, Holmes, & Cooper, 2004), while at the same time promoting obedience and discouraging creativity (Radclyffe-Thomas, 2007).

Confucian values play significant influence on education. In Confucian cultures, education is viewed as a serious and intensive undertaking. CHC students believe that progress is achieved through hard work and that everyone can succeed if they work hard enough (Starr, 2012). Confucian values motivate children's desire to obtain higher education and encourage parents to be involved in their children's learning journeys. Hence, many parents from CHC believe that their first duty is on their children's education and hold dear to the Confucian values of "if a son was not educated well, it was his father who should be blamed" (Yao, 2000, p.182).

When a great number of CHC international students attend classes in Western countries, certain misunderstanding arises. Many Western educators view CHC students as passive learners addicted to rote learning, unwilling to engage with peer learning group activities and unwilling to initiate debate with the teacher (Clark & Gieve, 2006; Biggs 1996). Some critics commented that CHC students lack creativity, independence and critical thinking (Ho, 1994). Biggs (1996) pointed out that CHC students see a task as requiring specific answers, tend to rote learn bits and pieces by memorising and concluded that CHC students use surface approach to learning. One major disagreement with these perceptions of CHC students comes from Starr (2012), who believed that these researchers are wrong because they have misinterpreted active memorisation as mindless rote learning, and have failed to perceive the silent cognitive processing of this memorised data that occurs in Confucian systems.

In some Western tertiary institutions, there have been suggestions that rote learning led to blatant copying of texts and websites and tendency for CHC students to plagiarise (Brennan & Durovic, 2005). Before these tertiary educators unfairly accuse CHC students of plagiarising academic works, they need to



understand the situation of CHC students who may have different practices in research citations, referencing and incorporating other researchers' ideas in their own assignments (Yang & Lin, 2009). With an increasing number of CHC international students studying in western cultural environments, Western teachers have to better understand the expectations of CHC students.

Not all research endorses the stereotyping of Confucian values in East Asian countries. Paton and Henry (2009) argue that to equate East Asian ethics solely to the ethical tenets of Confucian philosophy is an over-simplification. Paton and Henry (2009) comment that East Asian value systems have been reinforced by various other philosophical threads, especially by a continuum of interrelationship between East and West over at least the last millennium. Hence, the discussion of CHC international students should not neglect the interplay of other cultures.

In this study, the researcher categorised the research participants as CHC international students because of the commonality of their Confucian heritage background and to narrow the research scope. The above literature review points to the complexities relating to understanding Confucian-heritage students, the enthusiasm of their parents on the child's education and the Western conception of Confucian values. This literature review informs the researcher that to posit Confucianism as the core values of every CHC international students could be somewhat simplistic and misleading.

### **Pre-course learning expectations of CHC international students**

Like other international students, CHC students come to New Zealand with hopes and expectations. Before CHC international students come to New Zealand, they formed their expectations based on what they imagined life would be like. It was especially true if students had never travelled outside of their countries of origin. Research done by Marriot, du Plessis and Pu (2010) noted that many Chinese international students were on their first overseas study and only had a limited awareness of the world. Hence, expectation gaps were inevitable because they were uncertain of what to expect.

Bailey (2009) studied the expectations of ten International students in a twelve-week IELTS preparation course in an Auckland university and found that students had high expectations not only of an IELTS preparation course, but of the IELTS band score they would achieve. The study found that students' learning expectations were generally well met especially in areas like speaking, listening and more formative practice tests.

Birt, Sherry, Ling, Fisher and Lee (2004) explored four issues related to students' expectations of their business course. The four issues were theory or practice, deadline flexibility, study diligence and respect for the university teacher. Their research findings found generally positive outcomes, as international students had diligent study habits even though they also expected flexibility in deadlines for assignments. Marriot, du Plessis and Pu (2010) also found that international students expected quality in living standards, accommodation, health and safety, living expenditures, hygiene, culture and acceptance by local people.

Several research studies demonstrated that there was an expectancy gap between Asian international students and their teachers (Ward, 2001; Li, Baker & Marshall, 2002; Kingston & Forland, 2004). The main reasons for the mis-match were language problems, cultural incompatibilities and the teaching approach of academic staff. All these factors impacted negatively on students' learning experiences. Other research (Birt et al, 2004; Baker, Isaac, Li, & Marshall, 2005) also investigated some aspects of learning expectations of international students in New Zealand. However, there is limited literature that explored the pre-course learning expectations of international students before they commence study and their subsequent experiences in New Zealand.

Understanding the pre-course learning expectations of CHC international students is important for the education providers because students will leave the course if their subsequent experiences do not match their expectations (Bordia, Wales, Pittam, & Gallois, 2006). However, expectations are not readily visible or easily measurable. Brinch (2011) identified four different types of expectations: specific and aware, abstract and aware, abstract and unaware and lastly, specific and unaware. Flick (n.d.) noted that even though many people had expectations

that are often unstated and containing personal biases, these people still somehow assumed their abstract and unaware expectations should be understood and fulfilled. Under such circumstances, a mismatch of expectations and experience would most likely occur.

Carr, Gibson and Robinson (2001) posit that people use sets of stable assumptions (expectations) to inform their observation and that expectations varied between individuals and within an individual over time. Before coming to New Zealand, Chinese students focused largely on expected English language demands and not on familiarising themselves with the new academic culture and specific discourses of New Zealand (Skyrme, 2008). This lack of preparedness leads to subsequent mismatches between expectation and experience.

### **Factors influencing the formation of pre-course expectations**

What CHC students hear and see when they are in their home countries inevitably influence the formation of their initial expectations. However, coming from Confucian cultures that value collective ideology, views from parents, families and other authoritative figures also impact their personal choices and shape the formation of their pre-course expectations.

As customers, CHC international fee-paying students are entitled to set their pre-course expectations even though they were incorrect and were influenced by many too many external factors. Previous research has shown that several expectations attracted international students from East Asia to New Zealand: the relatively relaxed entry requirement, the low value of the New Zealand dollar, greater personal freedom and the perception that New Zealand is a clean, green, welcoming and safe place to study (Aston, 1996; Ward & Masgoret, 2004, as cited in Collins, 2006; Ho, Li, Cooper & Holmes, 2007).

A 2011 survey (Ministry of Education, 2011e) showed that international students were influenced to study in New Zealand based on four factors: friends' influence (45% of respondents), agent's influence (32% of respondents), information from the institution's website (30% of respondents), and parental influence (28% of

respondents). However, there is no specific literature on how these four factors specifically influence CHC international students' pre-course expectations.

Education is a high priority for many CHC parents. Many CHC parents prefer to send their children to study overseas because they believe that academic qualification from overseas offer greater opportunities and better life chances (Ho et al., 2007). Lam (2002) commented that for wealthy Vietnamese parents, sending their children overseas was a dream of a lifetime and they spared no expenses to make that happen. In Vietnam, parents had to prove they had at least USD 25,000 in a bank account, a stable income and collateral, before their child was eligible for the interview to enter an American university. Hence, it must be a big decision and a bigger sacrifice for parents to send their children overseas. Parents of international students paid premium fees for their children's education in New Zealand and some parents assumed that higher fees equalled higher quality (Butcher & McGrath, 2004). This supports the role of parents in influencing students' expectations. Parents expect their children to receive quality education and their children are expected to obtain a good qualification.

Education agents play a significant role in influencing CHC international students' initial expectations. Agents run education fairs in Confucian-heritage countries to recruit students to study in New Zealand as full fee-paying international students. Agents receive commissions selling education as a commodity. CHC international students become the customers 'buying' New Zealand education (Benson, 2006). Hence, coming to study in New Zealand becomes a sale transaction where agents can inflate expectations of the product and buyers can expect customer satisfaction

Collins (2012a) investigated the roles played by education agents in organising students' mobility both in bringing individual international student to Auckland and in shaping international migration to New Zealand. In particular, Collins (2012a) examined the roles played by education agents in connecting South Korean international students and the Korean-New Zealand community by providing opportunities for home-stay, apartment and language-school business. New Zealand institutions were increasingly dependent on international fee

income and a heavy dependence on education agents to recruit fee-paying international students (Ministry of Education, 2006a, Collins, 2012a). New Zealand institutions often paid off-shore education agents a commission to market and to recruit international students because the institutions lacked commercial capacity (Ministry of education, 2011e; Collins, 2012a). Some private training establishments (PTE) attracted international students into courses that do not meet NZQA requirements (Tan, 2012). On the other hand, international students and their families also paid education agents in their home countries for their service and advice in return for more choices about which overseas education institutions to attend (Golden, 2011). Hence education agents are crucial and effective facilitators in delivering international students to the target destinations.

Research by Collins (2012a) reported that international students used the service of education agents to find information on where to study, advice on the course of study, application to the institution and for a study visa, travel arrangements, accommodation. Upon arrival in Auckland, agents in Auckland provided social, learning and personal support like airport pick-up and drop-off services, free access to the Internet at the agent's office and many others (Collins, 2012a). Hence advice and service of education agents inevitably influence and set expectations of CHC international students.

Research by Ho et al (2007) revealed that inaccurate information provided by agents and other sources resulted in a dissonance in international students' expectations. They also recommended that the recruitment agents provide prospective students with more pre-departure briefings, better preparation and information on what to expect when they study abroad (Ho et al., 2007). It was important for education agents and institutions that recruited international students to set a clear conception of student expectations, and to provide impeccable services so that customer satisfaction and loyalty could be achieved (Bennet, 1998, as cited in Butcher & McGrath 2004, p.548). Immigration New Zealand's recent block on student visas for certain New Zealand schools (Laxon, 2012) showed that some education providers only focus on meeting New

Zealand Qualification Authority's (NZQA) demands and their own marketing and financial needs rather than the students' education.

On-line information on New Zealand website only contributed 30% in influencing international students to study in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2011e). This appears to indicate that 70% students do not 'buy' education online. However, research studies on this aspect are lacking.

### **The match between pre-course expectations and subsequent experiences**

International students are customers of the export education service. CHC international students come to study as fee-paying clients and they expect meaningful and positive New Zealand experiences, just like any customers would. The match between pre-course expectations and actual experience in New Zealand is an important indicator and a predictor of the success of the industry.

International learners who travel to English speaking countries to attend intensive English language courses have to make substantial monetary commitment.<sup>2</sup> These students have specific expectations and goals regarding the process of language learning and they expect to learn certain aspect of the language more than others. The fulfilment of these expectations may affect their motivation and learning (Bordia et al., 2006). In intensive English courses, Asian international students also face extreme time pressure which threatens their sense of identity as competent students because they are afraid of failing the course (Skyrme, 2008).

Li (2004) found that most Asian international students studying English in New Zealand enjoyed their experience. However, students who did not enjoy their experience were disappointed with the interactive teaching styles in New Zealand which differed from their perception of teaching and learning in their home country (Li, 2004). Similarly, when teachers had prejudices on the student's

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<sup>2</sup>In 2012 academic year , indicative fee for CIE course at Kia ora Polytechnic is NZD385 per week

ability, a negative 'self-fulfilling prophecy' in learning expectations occurs (Stipek, 2002). Hence, teachers played important roles in the learning outcomes of international students attending the English course. CHC international students expected the right answer from their teachers and they used textbooks as the final authority on information. Some researchers found that teachers need to use more positive responses to cater to the different cultural background of their Asian learners (Lim, 2002, as cited in Butcher & McGrath, 2004, p.545). Hence, it is important that teachers align the correct pedagogical methods to cater to the different learning styles of Asian international students, be aware that Asian international students want certainty and that they are often challenged by assignments in the English classes (Butcher & McGrath, 2004). In order to meet the learning expectations of Asian international students, teachers have to hear the voices of their students. Li (2004) suggested that the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students should include quality control of teacher competence, the course content, curricula, teaching pedagogies and learning resources and not just student welfare. This change will contribute to better learning experience for international students in New Zealand.

Research by Ho et al (2007) found that generally Chinese international students were satisfied with their educational experiences. However, there were several mismatches as well. Before Chinese international students came to New Zealand, they anticipated greater personal freedom. In reality, they experienced loneliness and isolation. Home-stay hosts provided great opportunities for social interaction and enabled the students to continue to learn English when they are with the host family (Tran, 2012), but cost and intercultural issues were reasons students chose flatting. Chinese international students aspired to have Kiwi friends, but this seldom happened. Instead, they tended to socialise, on and off campus with their co-nationals (Ho et al., 2007).

The experiences of international students during their study in New Zealand could vary because they were influenced by a combination of factors like their pre-course expectations, their English proficiency level and their interaction with local students and the wider community (Holloway, 2004). Campbell and Li (2008) explained that Asian international students lived across two cultures and

they faced certain paradoxes. Campbell and Li (2008) gave the example of 'Asian students liked the pressure-free learning environment, but they found it uncomfortable when competitions and high pressures were lacking' (p.389). Paradoxes are highly likely to generate conflicting expectations and perceptions. Hence, how individual student interprets paradoxes can contribute to their perception of fulfilment of pre-course expectations.

A New Zealand report carried out by the Ministry of Education in 2004 (Ward & Masgoret, 2004) reported that 24% of Asian international students indicated that they never spent social time with New Zealand friends, and 47% said they never studied with New Zealand students. Another research carried out by the Ministry of Education (2007a) indicated that 61% of international students would like to have more New Zealand friends, while 34% of the respondents reported that making Kiwi friends was difficult. Many international students believed domestic students were not interested in getting to know them and that making friends required input, tolerance and understanding from all sides (Ho et al, 2007). The Code of Pastoral Care of International Students (Ministry of Education, 2003) which involves caring for the whole person: the student's integrated experiences, educative, social, spiritual and psychological (Butcher & McGrath, 2004, p.548) may need to include provisions to foster friendship between domestic and international students.

As paying customers, international students would most probably look forward to the excellent and quality English learning experience as advertised. Once such expectations developed, they expected that their 'dreams' would be fulfilled and they would have a positive experience even if the information they received earlier was wrong (Stipek, 2002). This form of self-fulfilling prophecy contributed to the 'all things good' expectations of the Asian international students. Upon arrival in New Zealand, many fortunate students sang high praises on their overwhelmingly positive learning experiences. Unfortunately, some students who were enrolled in institutions that offered fraudulent certificates, dubious qualifications, poorly qualified teachers felt cheated because they were not given what the institutions had promised earlier (Laxon, 2012). Some Chinese international students were even deported over fraudulent students visas they



received (Cowlshaw, 2012). Depending on the institutions they enrolled in, there could be a match or a mismatch between their preconceived expectations and their actual experience (Ho et al., 2007).

Many international students formed unrealistic expectations because of erroneous information they received. Asian international students should take personal responsibility, do their own research on the institutions, learn more about life in New Zealand and check out the programme they enrol in before they commence their New Zealand sojourn (Ho et al., 2007). International students need to ensure that the information they receive were correct, current and valid.

## **CONCLUSION**

This literature review suggests that push factor from parents play a role in influencing students' pre-course expectations. Education agents influence the students' expectations by making things relatively easy and attractive for the students. Friends and the education institution's website play relatively minimum influence. These are all included as questions in the interview schedule.

This chapter has reviewed literature that is relevant to this research. The literature review helps the researcher to develop themes on the pre-course expectations and subsequent experiences of CHC international students in New Zealand. Key knowledge from this literature review has helped shape the research aim, research methods and research questions. The literature review has enabled the researcher to compare similarities and difference in the past research to the research findings in Chapter Four.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the methodological framework adopted in this study and provides the rationale for using a qualitative-interpretivist paradigm. Then, it discusses the procedures in the research process, how participants were selected and how data were analysed. It then outlines the importance of verification and discusses the importance of reliability, validity and triangulation. Lastly, it explains the ethical issues related to the research and how these were addressed.

### METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This section explains how the researcher decides on the research methodology, chooses the research method and identifies a qualitative-interpretivist paradigm.

#### **Research methodology**

Research methodology refers to research methods and the logic behind the methods that is used in the context of the research (Kumar, 2008). Hence, the researcher has to choose the correct research methodology that can best answer the research questions. Whether the research is quantitative or qualitative is a methodological choice. The choice depends on the research questions and the suitable methods to collect data to answer the research questions (Bryman, 2008). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) discriminate between quantitative and qualitative methods by explaining that quantitative research is based on data, measurement and relationship between variables while qualitative research emphasises how to construct social meanings, and stresses the relationship between the researcher and the research topic. Based on the research aim and research questions, the use of a qualitative-interpretivist method is the most suitable method for the present study.

#### **Research aim**

The aim of the research is to explore the pre-course expectations of a cohort of international students from China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan who are attending a 10-week CIE course at Kia ora Polytechnic. The study also investigates factors

influencing pre-course expectations and subsequent experiences, and whether their expectations are fulfilled.

### **Research questions**

The three research questions are:

1. What pre-course expectations do CHC international students from China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan have before they commence their CIE course at Kia ora Polytechnic?
2. How do these international students' subsequent experiences compare with their pre-course expectations?
3. What factors influence the formation of their pre-course expectations and subsequent experiences?

To answer the research questions, the most appropriate methodology choice is a qualitative- interpretivist approach using in-depth research interviews.

### **Research method**

Research method is the technique or procedure used to gather and analyse data related to the research questions (Crotty, 1998). However, before doing a research, the researcher has to identify the thesis's epistemology (Crotty, 1998) so that the researcher can justify the choice and use of a particular research method.

Epistemology deals with 'the nature of knowledge, its possibility, scope and general basis' (Hamlyn 1995, as cited in Crotty, 1998, p.8). Bryman (2008) explains that an epistemological issue concerned the question of the underlying beliefs of the researcher, whether the researcher can study the social world according to the same principles, procedures and ethos as the natural sciences. The epistemological position of the researcher is very important because it determines the way the research is carried out. Hence, it is critical that the researcher understands the prior knowledge informing the research, what kind of new knowledge and outcome can be further attained through the new research works so that other readers will take the new findings seriously.

The interpretive paradigm fits well with the researcher's epistemological beliefs because interpretivism requires the researcher to grasp the subjective meaning of certain social action (Bryman, 2008). Interpretivism suggests that the facts are produced as part and parcel of the social interaction of the researchers and the participants (Klein & Myers, 1999). An interpretive approach attempts to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them when they are in their natural settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In this qualitative-interpretivist research, the researcher has to be aware and be sensitive to biases, distortions, contradictions and possible differences in interpretation in the narratives that are collected from the participants (Klein & Myers, 1999).

In qualitative research, methods include surveys, interviews, observations and other techniques. Of the many methods, this study used face-to-face qualitative research interviews to collect qualitative data related to the research questions. Qualitative data from participant interviews facilitates the researcher to "understand" any social phenomenon from the perspective of the actors involved, rather than explaining it (unsuccessfully) from the outside (Ospina, 2004).

### **Qualitative research interviews**

Kvale (1993, as cited in Opdenakker, 2006) defines qualitative research interview as an interview that gathers descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena. There are several ways to conduct research interviews: face-to face interview, telephone interview and computer mediated interview such as the use of Skype. In this research, face-to-face interviews were used.

In face-to face interviews, there is no time delay between question and answer because the interviewee and interviewer can react directly on what the other says or does (Opdenakker, 2006). However, the interviewer has to be attentive to the narratives of the interviewee, allowing time for the interviewee to talk at the level of depth and detail, but also bearing in mind that all the questions have to be asked within a time limit. Interviews can be digitally recorded, but transcription of the tape recording is very time-consuming. Bryman (2008) warns that it takes

five to six hours to transcribe one hour of speech in a verbatim manner, but can be longer for an unskilled researcher.

### **Qualitative-interpretivist paradigm**

The interviewee's personal narratives in the in-depth interviews offer a good source of evidence and provide a rich source of information. These allow the researcher to glimpse into the complex and creative ways that individuals make sense of social reality through the causal logic of how the world around them works and how they negotiate between subjective and inter-subjective meanings.(Heitz, 2007) However, Heitz (2007) also comments that the qualitative-interpretivist approach does not 'discover', or 'recover' evidence. Instead there are three aspects of meaning construction from an interpretivist perspective: the subjective meaning of the interviewee, the inter-subjective meaning and the position of the researcher. Hence, the researcher has to be discerning and include triangulating the interview evidence with other sources if necessary.

### **STEPS IN CONDUCTING RESEARCH INTERVIEWS**

This section discusses how the researcher carried out the face-to-face interviews and how interview participants were selected.

#### **Face-to-face interviews**

This study used face-to-face research interviews because it was the most appropriate method to collect data for the research questions in this study. Face-to-face research interviews are a more personal form of interview, where the interviewer works directly with the participants and the participants are able to tell the researcher their personal stories and worldviews. The interviewer can also take advantage of social cues such as voice, intonation and body language of the interviewee to encourage details and openness in their communication (Opdenakker, 2006). Hence, face-to-face interviews enabled the researcher to elicit all manners of information from the participants. This information included the participant's own behaviour; attitudes; norms; beliefs; and values (Bryman 2008).

Through in-depth, face-to-face interviews, the interviewer captured the stories behind the participants' experiences. The ways participant narrated the stories revealed the various themes in the life-journey of the participant. Their answers help researchers to systematically and credibly examine, extract, and construct the social world and emotions of the participants (Saldana, 2011).

The participants volunteered for an hour-long, face-to-face in-depth interview. They participated on a voluntary basis because no incentives were given for their participation. All the interviews were conducted in the same situation, in a study room of Kia ora Polytechnic's library. After obtaining consent from the participant, each interview was digitally recorded. Each recording was transcribed in a verbatim manner so that the researcher could see things from the perspectives of each participant and find out both the facts and the meaning from a participant's narratives. The participants described their own self-understanding of pre-course expectations and subsequent experiences in a retrospective manner. However, participant's personal narratives were primarily from the participant's own emic perspectives (Morris, Leung, Ames, & Lickel, 1999). The researcher, however, was listening from the etic perspectives and making sense of the narratives from the external comprehensible features. Thus, the researcher had to understand the process of sense-making. The participant narratives were recounts of aspects of their lives. Understanding the process of sense-making enabled the researcher to connect the participants' logics, their worldview and how they interacted with their external environment. The researcher had to gain access to both the subjective and inter-subjective worlds of the participant because they are integral in interpretivist research (Heitz, 2007)

After the interview, the researcher immediately read through the audio recordings and took notes of what was not clear. Once the transcription was done, the researcher emailed the participants to check for correctness of the interview transcript. Correct transcripts served as a very reliable record for future reference.

When interviewing participants, the researcher was mindful not to assume that the interview was as simple as the interviewer just asking the right questions in

order to get the truth of the interviewee's voice, perceptions and opinions (Schostak, 2006, as cited in White & Drew, 2011, p.6). The researcher also understood that the interviewing process was not a systematic methodology, but was a highly skilled craft requiring a repertoire of specialised tasks and the execution of personal judgement (Weil, 2008). There are different Interview formats: from highly structured, consisting of a set of prepared and specific questions to be asked in a particular order of each participant, to unstructured, consisting of nothing more than a general list of topics for possible exploration (Saldana, 2011). In this research, a semi-structured interview format was used, pre-testing on two volunteers was carried and pre-interview preparations were done.

### **Semi-structured interviews**

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used to collect research data. An interview guide (Appendix C) listing questions on specific topics was used. The interview guide was useful because the participants were asked a similar set of topics, but their responses would be of an open nature. The process of semi-structured interviews was flexible because sometimes questions did not follow the exact order as scheduled in the interview guide. Generally, the researcher asked all the questions and used similar wordings. However, the researcher was also able to ask questions that were not included in the interview guide. Hence, the line of questioning was determined more by the flow of responses rather than as scheduled in the interview guide (Bryman, 2008). Throughout the interviews, the researcher encouraged participants to discuss the interview topics freely. In order to get more emic perspectives from the participants (Morris et al, 1999), the researcher occasionally went off on tangents in the interviews. This spontaneous 'side-track' contributed more insights into areas that were relevant and important (Bryman, 2008.)

In semi-structured interviews, the researcher explored and unpacked CHC international students' deep views in order to get rich, detailed narrations of their expectations and experiences in New Zealand. However, when participants articulated their inner feelings in their own words, their responses were shaped, coloured and framed by their own personal experiences and interpretations of

them. Hence, the researcher had to be mindful that understanding the meanings of participants' narratives required more complex interpretive process than just reading the verbatim transcripts.

Feedback from pre-testing confirmed that some CHC international students participating in the interview had limited English skills because they were still learning English. The researcher was also aware that the whole interview process would place significant demand on the interviewee's cognitive and linguistic skill. With this in mind, the researcher would ask short, precise, simple and clear questions; and only one question was asked at a time (Tolich & Davidson, 2011). Even though the interview guide (Appendix C) contained many short questions, the focus was on the three main research questions. The researcher would attempt to follow the advice of Boyle and Neale (2006) who state that the interview should only contain 15 main questions and that factual questions be asked first and opinion questions last.

### **Pre-testing**

Prior to the actual data collection stage, the initial interview guide was pre-tested and refined with two volunteers. Czaja (1998) defines pre-testing as testing a set of questions or the questionnaire on members of the target population. Pre-testing in this study helped identify problems relating to participants' comprehension, responses and interest. Feedback from pre-testing allowed the researcher to fine-tune the wordings and flow of the questions (Czaja, 1998). Hence, the pre-testing process increased the researcher's skill and experience as an interviewer. It also increased the researcher's familiarity, comfort and confidence with the interview process.

Initially, the researcher had decided that the participant sample should not be limited with regards to gender, ethnicity, and level of English proficiency. However, a contrast between the views articulated by the two volunteers involved in pre-testing confirmed that English ability played an important role in the success of the research. Hence, the pre-testing stage was useful because it contributed information to the selection criteria for participants. Pre-testing



confirmed that CHC international students had limited English proficiency and had anxiety engaging in long conversations in English.

### **Pre-interview preparation**

Feedback from the pre-testing stage confirmed that generally CHC international students in the CIE course were quite new to New Zealand, were still learning English, had limited English skills and they could be nervous. With this in mind, modifications were done on the semi-structured interview questions and the overall interview process. The researcher was aware that students would have a lot of anxiety and would be reluctant to be interviewed. Hence even though a semi-structured interview process was used, questions needed to be simple and short. Focus would be on students' responses and not on their English proficiency of grammar, accent or the correctness of the language.

There were several preparations to be done before the actual interview. The preparations included: formulating interview questions according to the topic area and context of the research questions, use of simple English language that was comprehensible to the participants, audio-recording the interview and ensuring that the interview venue was quiet, private and familiar to the participants (Bryman, 2008). The pre-interview preparation also included getting informed consent from the participants. The principle of informed consent meant that the participants understood the purpose of the research and their nature of involvement in the research. They were also informed that participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from participation at any time. The researcher would also assure them that their privacy would not be violated and that confidentiality and safe keeping of the data were ensured (Bryman, 2008).

During the initial stage of the face-to-face interview, a 'show card' as suggested by Bryman (2008, p.207) was used to prompt participants. A 'show card' would be handed to the interviewee at different points of the interviews whenever the interviewer perceived that the interviewee was struggling with English. The 'show card' would display answers for vocabulary that were difficult to comprehend or involved sensitive areas such as participants levels of happiness and the way they rated their fulfilment of expectations.

Interviews were conducted individually in the institution's library study room during semester three and semester four of the CIE course. Each interview averaged around 60 minutes. The interviewees were given a copy of the interview guide (Appendix C) prior to the interview to allow them time to understand the questions and think about their response (Boyle & Neale, 2006). The researcher explained the aims of the research and how the interview would be carried out before the consent form was signed by the interviewee. The researcher also asked for informed consent for the use of a digital voice recorder.

## **PARTICIPANT SELECTION**

### **Selection Criteria**

According to Saldana (2011, p.34), sampling should be strategic, referred, random and with serendipitous selection of participants to collect a representatively broad to tightly focused overview of perspectives. In this research, purposeful sampling was used to select a sample that fitted the criteria of this research. Purposeful sampling (Merriam, 2009) is based on the assumption that the researcher wants to discover, understand, and gain insight from a selected sample. Purposeful sampling is essentially a strategic attempt to establish a good correspondence between the research questions and sampling (Bryman, 2008). In this research, participants for the semi-structured interviews had to meet the following criteria:

- Fee-paying CHC international students from China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan
- Studying at level 5 of the CIE course.

Only CHC students from level 5 of CIE courses were selected because they were more proficient users of English and therefore more articulate and able to provide greater depth in their responses. Another reason was that all the interviews were going to be conducted in English and no interpreter would be used.

**Recruitment method**

Potential participants were recruited through a purposeful sampling method through canvassing. It began with obtaining consent from the Head of Department, Department of Language Studies of Kia ora Polytechnic allowing the researcher to conduct the research during semester three in 2012 (Appendix E). Then, permission was obtained from lecturers and they helped to identify CHC international students in Level 5 of CIE. A date was fixed for the researcher to meet with the CHC students immediately after the end of a lecture. The researcher presented the research studies, but only a handful of students were interested while a larger group started noisily to depart for their lunch break. Amidst the confusion, information sheets containing the research outline and the researcher's contact details were distributed. Overall, the attempt to attract some attention from students was difficult. About eight students responded by returning emails, but only four students agreed to meet for the interview. Out of the four who responded, text messaging via mobile phone and email correspondence were used to set a time and venue for the interview. Finally, only three turned up for the actual interview. Then, the research had to temporarily come to a stop because students did not wish to be distracted during their semester examinations period and semester break.

The small number of interviews conducted was not enough to meet the research requirement. In semester four of the 2012 academic year, the researcher met with the lecturer again and the suggestion was to meet with the class. After reflecting on the shortcomings of the earlier attempt, the researcher used a different strategy. Instead of meeting the students again, the researcher discussed with the lecturer and was given permission to meet with the student advisor of the Department of Language Studies. The meeting was refreshing because the researcher could empathise with the student advisor regarding issues of CHC international students. With the assistance of the student advisor, the researcher was able to recruit ten potential participants via email correspondence, but only six actually turned up for their interview. The final total of nine research participants exceeded the initial target of eight participants.

### **Determination of sample size**

The sample size was dependent on several considerations: time and cost (Bryman, 2008), and the reality of what happened. Initially, the researcher planned to have two participants from Chinese students, two Korean participants and two each from Vietnam and Japan, making a total of eight participants. The researcher believed the sampling population of eight participants roughly matched the CHC international students' profiling and represented a reasonable cross-section of CHC international students in the CIE course. The researcher was also confident that rich and detailed data would be collected through in-depth research interviews conducted with these eight CHC international students.

Successfully recruiting research participants that meet the criteria was not easy. In both semesters, a total of three Chinese students, two Korean students and two Vietnamese students were interviewed, but no Japanese student was willing to participate. Near the end of semester four, help was solicited from the earlier participants. The researcher explained her situation and asked those who had volunteered earlier to put her in contact with their Japanese classmates. Finally, Yoko (a Japanese student) volunteered. The contribution from Yoko concluded this long and challenging research interview journey.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

During each interview, the researcher listened attentively and jotted down notes to capture key themes that were present and which were absent. The whole recording of the interviews was listened to immediately after each interview. This enabled the researcher to recall the interview and, when necessary, refer to the notes to get a sense of the whole interview moment. The researcher transcribed all the interviews in a word-for-word verbatim manner, all by herself. There were a lot of benefits transcribing the data personally. As the researcher became familiar with the data, it was easier to discern the underlying commonalities, linkages and connections between text units across interviews, hence making the whole data analysis process easier (Spiggle, 1994). The audio recording of the interview was transcribed into Microsoft Word document. The Word

document was formatted with a wide margin so that the space could be used for identifying and annotating recurring themes.

The researcher critically re-read the transcripts to access the meanings the interviewees gave to events, feelings and behaviours in their lives (Heitz, 2007). This enabled the researcher to identify responses for each question and group the responses that showed similar and recurring elements or themes so that a qualitative content analysis could be carried out.

According to Zhang and Wildemuth (2009), content analysis involves eight operations: preparing the data, defining the unit of analysis, developing categories and a coding scheme, testing coding scheme on a sample of text, coding all the text, assessing the consistency of coding used, drawing conclusions from the coded data, and reporting the methods and findings involved. The researcher did not follow every step as suggested by Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) because the data were analysed by hands without the help of computer software.

Zhang and Wilemuth (2009) recommended that qualitative content analysis be supported by computer programs, such as NVivo1 or ATLAS.ti. (Zhang & Wilermuth, 2009). However, the researcher did not use any computer software for data analysis in this research because the limited scale of the study did not justify the investment of time required for this method of data analysis. Instead, interview transcripts were subjected to the traditional mechanics of analysis by hand, coding by marking them with colours and using a coding system for data analysis (Weitzman, 2000).

### **VERIFICATION STRATEGIES**

This section discusses reliability, validity and triangulation as relevant research concepts to demonstrate that the study is credible and to ensure the attainment of rigour in research.

Verification is the process of checking, confirming, making sure, and being certain (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002). Hence, verification in

qualitative research refers to the mechanism used in the process of research to incrementally ensure reliability and validity. Alternative criteria such as credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability are also mechanisms to verify the trustworthiness of a qualitative research study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, as cited in Bryman 2008). Hence, reliability, validity and trustworthiness are all verification strategies to ensure truth of the study.

### **Reliability**

Reliability describes how far a particular procedure, such as research interviews and questionnaires, will produce similar results in different circumstances, assuming nothing else has changed (Roberts, Priest & Traynor, 2006).

To ensure reliability, the researcher detailed the steps of the research process. The researcher personally transcribed the research interviews in a verbatim manner, paying detailed attention to the content. Audio-recordings of the interviews also provided an excellent record of actual interactions. There was no other person involved in transcription and this would reduce inter-transcription reliability. However, it also meant that the researcher had great personal responsibility and would have to bear all the consequences of any discrepancy.

The central methodological issue for this qualitative research was the reliability of the interview schedule and the selection of participants in the sample (Seale & Silverman, 1997). In this study, face-to-face interviews were used to gather an authentic understanding of the participant's personal narratives. The researcher believed that authenticity was very important, but had also detailed the steps of the research process so that reliability was ensured.

### **Validity**

Validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research and there are several types of validity: measurement validity, internal validity, external validity and ecological validity (Bryman, 2008). Generally, validity is usually taken to refer to the researchers measuring what they set out to measure. However, there are different opinions on validity

because some researchers suggest the concept of validity is incompatible with qualitative research (Morse et al., 2002).

This research used qualitative-interpretivist method and employed personal narratives as evidence in interpretivist research. In this study, the researcher asked a similar series of semi-structured questions to elicit comparable answers from the nine participants. This research aimed to gather valid and reliable themes that answered the research questions on students' pre-course expectations and subsequent experiences. Hence the yardstick of what constitutes validity in qualitative-interpretivist method is different from quantitative research methods (Heitz, 2007).

This research was based on the perspective of a qualitative-interpretivist paradigm, and the researcher believed that interpretivist validity was achieved. The basis of interpretivist validity is in making interviews more like conversations, where the interviewer has the flexibility to pursue questions that come up during the interview process but are not part of the interview schedule. This is because interpretivist researcher often finds important insights from the line of conversation that appear 'off-topic' (Heitz, 2007). However, validity presumes reliability. This means that if what the research sets out to measure is not reliable, the research cannot be valid (Bryman, 2008).

### **Triangulation**

Triangulation strengthens a research study by combining the use of different research methods which will enable cross-checking of the research findings (Bryman, 2008; Golafshani, 2003; Shenton, 2004).

This research interview had collected data from nine participants from four Confucian-heritage countries. This was one way of triangulating through data sources because individual viewpoints could be compared with each other and ultimately, a rich picture of their pre-course expectations and subsequent experiences could be constructed based on the contribution from a diversity of interviewees (Shenton, 2004). Once the transcription was completed, the researcher would email the participants to check for correctness of the interview

transcript. Participants reviewing what they had said can be considered a form of cross checking the research findings because correct transcripts serve as a very reliable and valid record for future reference. Constant supervision and feedback from the research supervisor also added opportunities to cross checking of research findings.

### **ETHICAL ISSUES**

This research strictly adheres to the guidelines set by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee's (UREC) policy document (UREC, 2009). The document provides eight guiding principles governing research Ethics:

- informed and voluntary consent;
- respect for rights and confidentiality and preservation of anonymity;
- minimisation of harm;
- cultural and social sensitivity;
- limitation of deception;
- respect for intellectual and cultural property ownership;
- avoidance of conflict of interest;
- research design adequacy

(UREC, 2009)

A research proposal was submitted to the Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC) for approval prior to starting the study. The application included four documents: participant information sheet (Appendix A), organisation information sheet (Appendix D), consent form (Appendix B) and interview guide (Appendix C).

In order to satisfy UREC requirements, the researcher ensured that participants were informed about the aims of the research before they volunteered. Every participant was given an information sheet which explained the research project and what were required from the participant (Appendix A). Participants had to give their consent to take part (Appendix B), and that their consent was informed by their knowing what they are taking part in. The voluntary nature of participation was clarified and participants knew that they were allowed to



choose whether or not to participate in the research. During the interview, the participants had to confirm that they gave permission for their interviews to be digitally recorded.

In order to protect participants from potential harm, the researcher had to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of participants (Bryman, 2008). All the participants' personal information, the polytechnic and the CIE course they attended would not be disclosed so that anonymity is guaranteed. All interview data were password-protected and all documents were kept in locked cabinets so that the interview data would be kept confidential.

The researcher was fully aware of cultural and social sensitivity of the CHC international students. Before the interview, each participant was informed about the questions in the interview guide (Appendix C). The researcher was aware that in a semi-structured interview, accidental and unintentional questions which were displeasing to the participants might conflict with the students' Confucian values. Hence, care and due diligence were taken to respect the participants' cultural values and protocols. Even though the researcher did not know any of the participants, she also had to constantly self-regulate her personal and research ethics to ensure that deception, conflict of interest and ethical transgression did not happen. Hence, all data collection and meaning creation processes followed strict research guidelines to prevent dilemmas and moral issues that might arise.

The researcher realised that language barrier could be a big challenge for non-native English speakers and harm to the participants could occur if the researcher imposed a lot of stress on them during the interviews. The researcher was mindful that students had a lot of anxiety and were reluctant to be interviewed. Instead of putting words into the mouths of the participants and completing the answers for them, the researcher would use 'show cards' (Bryman, 2008, p.207), probe questions (Boyle & Neale, 2006) and prompts (Gillham, 2001) to solicit responses. The research would build rapport with the participant during the interview and adopt a spirit of honesty and humility (Friesen, 2010). The researcher would strive to constantly follow the eight ethical

practices and uphold the standards as set out in UREC policy document (UREC, 2009).

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the findings from the semi-structured research interviews with nine participants. Presentation of research data is according to the structure of the research interviews. The chapter begins by profiling the participants and presenting the overview of research findings. Next, participants' interpretations of their prior expectations and subsequent experiences are reported together. Following this, factors influencing their expectations are discussed.

### **PROFILE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

The nine participants consisting of five males and four females were between 20 years to 35 years old and consisted of four Chinese, two Korean, two Vietnamese, and one Japanese. At the time of the interview, all of the participants were undertaking a 10-week intensive English course at Kia ora Polytechnic.

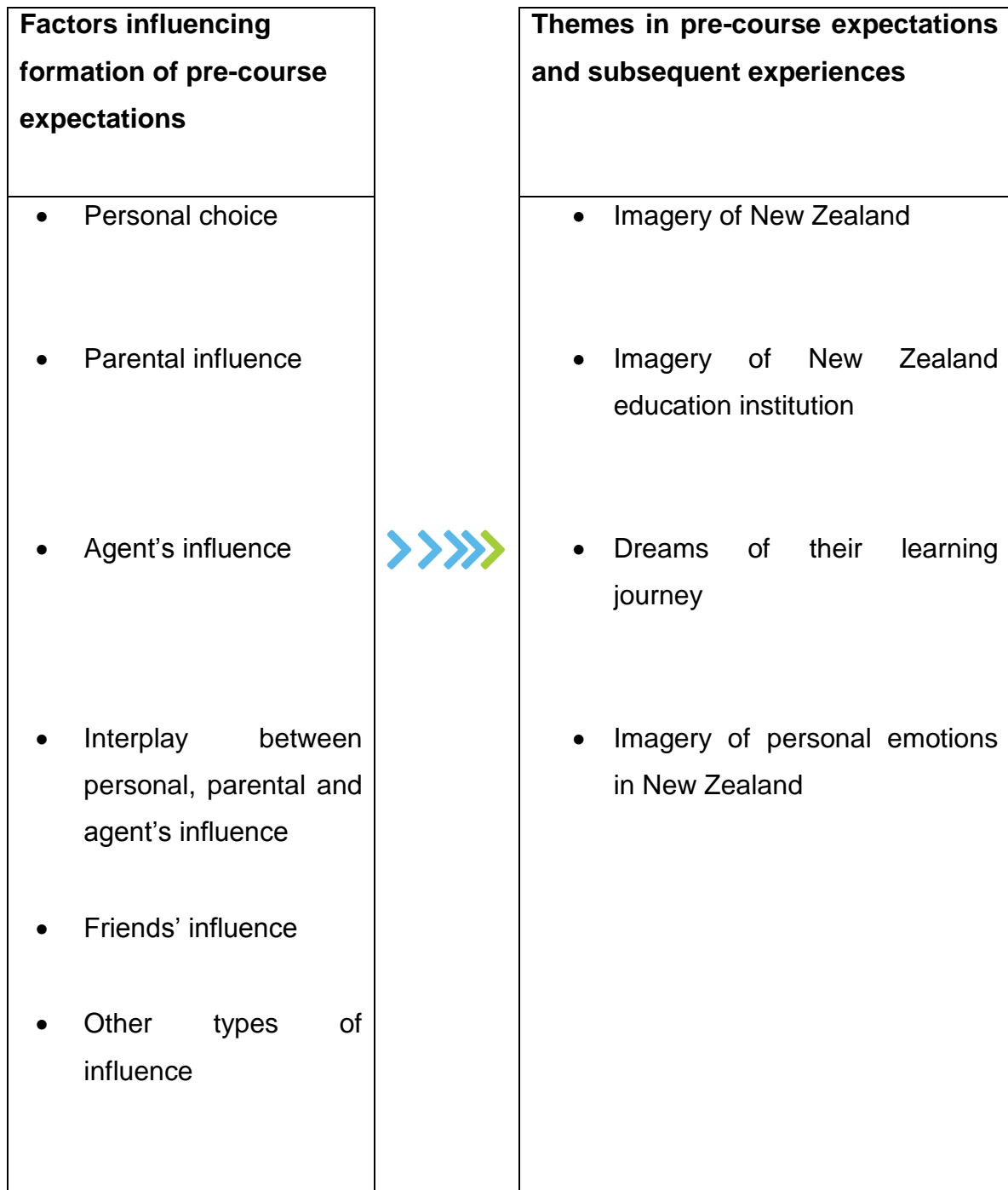
None of the participants worked in New Zealand because their student visas did not allow that. All the participants, except Yoko, declared that they received full financial support from their parents. Yoko took a half year break from her work in Japan and used her personal savings from work to support herself in New Zealand.

**Table 4.1: Profile of Research Participants**

Pseudonym of Participant	Gender	Age Range	Nationality	First time in a foreign country	First institution to study in	Lone traveller
Carl	Male	20-24	China	Yes	An Auckland College	Yes
Victor	Male	20-24	Vietnam	Yes	Polytechnic	Yes
Kevin	Male	20-24	Korea	Yes	Polytechnic	Yes
Charles	Male	20-24	China	Yes	Polytechnic	With another friend
Carol	Female	20-24	China	No, had visited North Korea	Polytechnic	With another friend
Kay	Female	25-30	Korea	Yes	Polytechnic	Yes
Vincent	Male	20-24	Vietnam	Yes	Polytechnic	Yes
Yoko	Female	30-35	Japan	No, had visited New Zealand	Language School in City	Yes
Cindy	Female	20-24	China	No, had visited Maldives	Polytechnic	Yes

### **THEMES FROM PARTICIPANTS' INTERVIEWS**

After listening through the nine interviews, and linking similar elements in the ways participants constructed their thoughts, the researcher identified four main themes related to participants' pre-course expectations and their subsequent experiences. The researcher also identified factors that had influenced the formation of pre-course expectations. An overview of the findings is represented in Figure 4.1.

**Figure 4.1: Overview of Research Findings**

Data from research interviews showed that before these participants came to New Zealand, they had formed four main themes in their pre-course expectations. The four themes included: what they imagined of New Zealand as a country to live in, a place to receive education in, their own learning journeys and their imagination of their personal emotions in New Zealand. The participants formed these themes when they were still in their home countries and before coming to New Zealand. Hence their pre-course expectations were

based on what they guessed, their 'self-predictions', and the ideas contributed by factors like parents, education agents and friends. The fulfilment of these expectations was interpreted as positive New Zealand experiences.

Each theme consisted of several sub-themes. The sub-themes were identified from what the participants said: their views on their expectations, their reports on what they experienced, and how they reacted to the interplay of expectations and experiences. Generally, participant's speech at the beginning of the interview tended to be hesitant, halting, repetitive, containing inaudible words and many unfinished and incoherent sentences. By mid-interview, most participants became quite engaging in what they wanted to say and their speech was no longer hesitant. Instead, they contained sounds of emotions: some cheerful, some doubtful, some sad. By the end of the interview, both the researcher and the participant were happy to stretch the time of interview longer because both parties had really enjoyed the conversation. The researcher's initial worry of the participants' limited English skill was unfounded because most of them succeeded in expressing their feelings and conveying their message in their own creative style of English.

When presenting research findings, the researcher inserted the participants' own spoken words that were most relevant and represented answers to the research questions. These verbatim quotations formed part of the interview data because these quotations helped to exemplify their opinions and offered readers greater depth of understanding. Corden and Sainsbury (2006) believe that the participants' spoken words can sometimes show the strength of their views and the depth of their feelings in ways that the researcher's own narrative can not.

Most participants in the research were young but they all generally displayed a keen desire to study English in an English-speaking country. Even though most of them stated that going overseas was their personal choice, they were also generally influenced by their parents, their off-shore education agents, their friends and other influences like the internet. Most importantly, all these influences were interconnected.

### Themes on pre-course expectations

At the start of the interview, participants were always asked to clarify what they understood by the word 'expect'. Some participants understood it to mean 'what I think', 'what I want', 'my self-predictions', and 'my own dreams'. Victor's understanding of 'expectation' was the most succinct.

*No, no, I'm not dreaming. I expect ..... I know that New Zealand is a modern country and I am looking forward to ...yes, yes, look forward to getting.... and if they are different , I will be sad .....no, no, disappointed.*

Coming to New Zealand was the first trip out of their home countries for six of the nine participants. When asked what they expected New Zealand to be like before they arrived, participants drew on limited knowledge to guess their 'self predictions' of what New Zealand would be. Table 4.2 shows participants' construction of the four themes in their pre-course expectations. Each theme contains sub-themes that elaborate what are contained in the themes. When interview data were coded for themes and sub-themes, the researcher used the symbol ✓ to indicate presence of the themes and the symbol ✗ to indicate absence of the theme in the participant's personal narratives. These symbols are used in Tables 4.3 to 4.6

**Table 4.2: Four themes that emerged from the research interview**

	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>
1	Imagery of New Zealand as a good country to live in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Happy country</li> <li>• Fresh air</li> <li>• Clean and green environment</li> <li>• Feel safe living here</li> <li>• Friendly people</li> <li>• An expensive country</li> </ul>
2	Imagery of the New Zealand education institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good learning environment</li> <li>• Good teachers</li> <li>• Interact with Kiwi friends</li> <li>• Competitive tuition fees</li> </ul>
3	Dreams of their New Zealand learning journey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve speaking skills</li> <li>• Improve listening skills</li> <li>• Improve writing skills</li> <li>• Improve reading skills</li> <li>• Get a certificate from Kio ora Polytechnic</li> <li>• Study for ILETS</li> <li>• As a pathway to degree course in New Zealand</li> </ul>
4	Imagery of personal emotion in New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will be happy in New Zealand</li> <li>• Feeling of being lucky</li> <li>• Will make the best use of the opportunity</li> <li>• Will have lots of personal freedom</li> </ul>



### ***Theme on 'imagery of New Zealand'***

In this theme, participants appeared to share the same images of New Zealand as clean and green where the people are friendly and the country is safe but expensive to live in. Table 4.3 provides a summary of the sub-themes within the theme and how individual participants related to them.

**Table 4.3: Sub-themes within the theme of 'imagery of New Zealand'**

Participant	Happy country	Fresh air	Clean and green	Feel safe	Friendly people	Expensive country
Carl	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Victor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Kevin	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Charles	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
Carol	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kay	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vincent	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Yoko	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cindy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗

Participants often based their expectations on what they imagined. For most of the participants who had not visited other countries before, they appeared to associate New Zealand with what they were informed in movies and tourist brochures. Carl, a young student from China, had never been out of his home town. He had strong expectations of what he thought he would find when he came.

*I think all the white people and I will be one big family.*

Carl's comment was an expression that he perceived he could make friends easily and he expected to be accepted into the New Zealand society, to be able to interact and to fit in.

Although Carol had been to North Korea before, she too, based her expectation on imagination gathered from the movie, *Lord of the Rings*. She expected New

Zealand to be a place that has awesome landscapes, an incredible green environment and probably the hobbit homes with their circular windows and doors. Carol said:

*I'm not sure about New Zealand because it is quite far away from my homeland. In my image, it is just like the 'Lord of the Rings'. Ya, ya, just like the hobbits, very beautiful.*

While the majority have expectations, Kevin came to New Zealand without any expectations of his own

*Actually I came to New Zealand without any expectations. I finished my military service on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2012 and two weeks later I came to New Zealand. I arrived Auckland on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2012. I have no expectations of my own. For me, because I just come out from two years of military service, I don't have expectations of New Zealand lifestyle, just military lifestyle and New Zealand lifestyle. Of course New Zealand is much better.*

While most participants appeared to only have limited knowledge, Victor was better informed and was more discerning. He was able to appreciate when there was a match between his expectation and experience, but was equally critical when there was a mismatch.

*I feel safe here. If there are some fighting or crimes, the police come within five minutes. In the campus, most people are friendly but when I go back to my flat in the city, some are not so friendly ... some are mental.... I see so many homeless people in the city and I am disappointed. There are many homeless people in Ho Chi Min City but New Zealand is a modern country and still, so many homeless people. This is not what I expect to see.*

### **Theme on 'imagery of the New Zealand education institution'**

When participants chose to attend CIE course in New Zealand, they expected that studying in an English speaking environment would enable them to improve their English proficiency faster. Table 4.4 shows a summary of sub-themes within the theme of imagery of the New Zealand education institution. The sub-themes are: a good environment to learn English, the guidance of good teachers, a chance to interact with Kiwi friends and competitive tuition fees

**Table 4.4: Sub-themes within the theme of ‘imagery of New Zealand Education Institution’**

Participant	Good learning environment	Good teachers	Interact with Kiwi friends	Competitive tuition fees
Carl	✓	✓	✓	✓
Victor	✓	✓	✓	✗
Kevin	✗	✗	✗	✗
Charles	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carol	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kay	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vincent	✓	✓	✓	✓
Yoko	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cindy	✓	✓	✓	✓

Cindy’s comment was representative of what the participants meant by good learning environment and good teachers.

*In China, teachers just teach and we do exercises, very boring and I’m always sleepy in class. Here teachers can put you in a group, sometimes we play some games to help us remember the words, teachers are always very active.*

Most participants expected that they would naturally interact with Kiwi people when they study here. Carl’s response was revealing.

*Yes, I think when I study in New Zealand, I will have many white people in my class. I am very excited that I can communicate with them, that’s why I want to study here.*

Even though most participants expressed that tuition fees were not cheap, most did not know the exact amount. Charles’s vague statement showed that most participants were financially well supported. This resulted in the participants’ lackadaisical approach in their financial knowledge.

*It is about \$300 per week, I think.....I don’t know. My parents paid a lump sum for a block of 10 weeks’ course. It’s expensive but OK.*

Victor was the only participant who was able to justify that tuition fees could be more competitive.

*It is a good place to study but the fee is expensive, \$380 a week. Maybe you can discount a little, say \$300 a week, there will be more Vietnamese students coming over to study.*

### **Theme on ‘dreams of their New Zealand learning journey’**

Before these participants came to New Zealand, most of them had expectations that they would achieve better learning outcomes in the four components of English: reading, writing, speaking and listening. Eight participants expected that they would be able to engage in conversation with ‘white people’ because they have high expectations to improve their speaking and listening skills. Almost all participants had learned English in their home countries and some believed that they were well versed in English grammar. Only four participants expected to write better English, while six participants expected to improve their reading skills. Probably because of the nature of a short intensive English course, only two participants had expectations to get a certificate from Kia ora Polytechnic, to study for ILETS and to use the CIE course as a pathway to enrol in a degree course in New Zealand.

**Table 4.5: Sub-themes within the theme of ‘dreams of their learning journey’**

Participant	Improve speaking skills	Improve listening skills	Improve writing skills	Improve reading skills	Certificate from Polytech	Study for ILETS	pathway to NZ degree
Carl	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Victor	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
Kevin	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Charles	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Carol	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Kay	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Vincent	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Yoko	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
Cindy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

One participant, Kevin , had no idea what to expect because he was filling in the six months 'gap' time between his mandatory military training and re-joining his university studies. However, he commented

*I have no expectations of my learning journey. For me, I come here because the important thing is that I can study English. .... I have to go back to Korea in January 2013 to continue my university study.*

### **Theme on 'imagery of personal emotion'**

All the participants had expected the 'feel good' factors in New Zealand. Kevin was the exception because he came not knowing what to expect. Yoko was the oldest participant and she was the only one who had to use her savings. The other eight participants were young and their New Zealand trips were paid up in advance by their parents. They had parents who trusted them and financially supported them. Their parents enabled their freedom of choice and they were not escaping from any form of parental control. Generally, most participants were aware that they were fortunate, would make good use of their opportunities so that good things would continue to come their ways when they were in New Zealand.

**Table 4.6: Sub-themes within the theme of 'imagery of personal emotions'**

Participant	Will enjoy life in NZ	Will be happy	Feeling of being lucky	Make good use of the opportunity	Personal freedom
Carl	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Victor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kevin	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Charles	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carol	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kay	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
Vincent	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Yoko	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cindy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Kay who was in her late 20s was reserved in her expectations. She said,

*I didn't expect anything because expectation is high the gap will be very far. So I think not good, not bad, so-so and I want to increase the happiness and everything*

Cindy's reflection succinctly summarised the 'imagery of personal emotions' of most participants. She reflected,

*My parents gave me such a wonderful opportunity to come to New Zealand. It's up to me to control myself, to enjoy my life, be happy and count my blessings. It's up to me to be what I want to be. I'm lucky and will make the best of this opportunity I think luck is up to me. If I think I am lucky, I will be lucky.*

Kevin did not know about New Zealand before he came and immediately faced an emotional and cultural shock when he arrived.

*When I arrived Auckland Airport, an old Kiwi driver waited to fetch me and he held up my name in the arrival hall. He is very old and I'm very embarrassed when he wanted to carry my bags. I couldn't speak English so I pulled my bags away from his hands. I kept bowing to the old man. But the old man was not pleased and muttered throughout the journey from the airport to my home-stay. I was very worried that I had done something wrong.*

### **Key findings of participants' pre-course expectations**

There were four key findings in participants' pre-course expectations:

- They look forward to be in a country that is clean, green, happy, safe, and friendly, but expensive.
- New Zealand education institution provides good learning, good teachers, environment to interact with Kiwi friends and competitive tuition fees.
- A great learning journey where they will improve their English proficiency in the four components: reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- They will enjoy life in New Zealand: happy, free, lucky and can be 'what they want to be'.

These expectations were formed when the participants were still in their home countries. Participants were looking forward to getting what they expected and

the fulfilment of these expectations were translated into positive experience. These key findings will be further examined and discussed in Chapter Five.

### **SUBSEQUENT EXPERIENCES VERSUS PRE-COURSE EXPECTATIONS**

Generally, the nine participants assessed that their subsequent experiences in New Zealand were better and more positive compared with their pre-course expectations. The majority of the participants came to New Zealand with a keen focus to improve their English proficiency. After listening through the narratives of the participants, it became obvious that most of the participants had an acute sense of knowing what they wanted from the education institution, their CIE course and their improvement in English language. Most participants were able to use the English skills they had learned to vividly describe their feelings. In particular, they appeared to rate themselves as more proficient and confident users of English after just a short period of studying English in Kia ora Polytechnic. Many wished that they could continue their study and live in New Zealand, if they and their parents could afford to financially. Many participants would recommend their friends back home to choose New Zealand as a study destination. Amidst all the positive feedback, almost all the participants were disappointed that they did not make any friend with Kiwi people and therefore had no opportunity to connect to Kiwi cultures.

Table 4.7 summarises how the participants compared their subsequent experiences with their pre-course expectations, which indirectly revealed whether their experiences match their pre-course expectations, were better than or worse than what they had expected.

**Table 4.7: Subsequent experiences versus pre-course expectations**

Participant	Imagery of NZ	Imagery of NZ institutions	Dreams of their leaning journey	Imagery of personal emotion
Carl	-	+	+	0
Victor	-	0	+	-
Kevin	++	++	++	++
Charles	++	+	+	+
Carol	++	++	++	++
Kay	++	0	+	++
Vincent	-	+	++	+
Janet	++	+	++	++
Cindy	++	+	+	++

Keys to symbols used

+ some positive experiences

++ many positive experiences

0 ambivalent, neither positive nor negative experiences

- some negative experiences

-- some negative experiences

Six out nine participants had many positive experiences on their pre-course imagery of New Zealand. However, for some participants, they were surprised and disturbed to encounter things that differed greatly from what they had earlier imagined.

Carl, who imagined that *'all the white people and I will be one big family'* was surprised that there were predominantly Chinese speaking old people in his church in the suburb.

*My church in China, many young members and their age is between 18 to 19 year-old. There are many beautiful and historically famous churches in New Zealand but many people don't go to church. I don't expect this. I feel so sad and sorry for them.*



Vincent, who imagined New Zealand to be all things good felt trapped and was fed-up by the same routine.

*I live in the city. After class I come back to my apartment and look at the water front from my window. When I first came, I like the clean environment, now I don't quite bother. I have nothing else to do besides studying very hard. I feel quite fed-up with everything here.*

Even though Vincent felt the life was routine, he had positive experience in his study. He associated his improvement with the new learning environment. He reflected,

*But my English ability I think has improved from 40% to 70%. It's higher than what I've expected because I've improved my English skill and I can communicate with a lot of people. Here I can study English that is practical and not boring theories. You know theories are just letter and many words and to learn by heart. Now I can practise.*

Despite having no pre-course expectations, Kevin's comment on his subsequent experiences and improvement in English were revealing.

*My life in the polytechnic, some good, some not so good. Some teachers are good. In Korea, only the teachers talking and some use Korean to teach English. When I first arrived, I can't speak much English, I would rate my English ability as 50%. Now, I rate myself as 70%. In class, some classmates speak to each other in their own native language, can be noisy and they don't study, but I enjoy studying here.*

Carol attributed her positive experiences to her teachers, her flat mates and the all-round support from her parents. She reflected on what she was told before she came and what she found out subsequently. Sadly, she lamented over her inability to make Kiwi friends. Carol explained,

*When I first arrived New Zealand on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2012, I rated my English ability as 30%. Now it's November 2012, I think my English has improved to 80%. Teachers here are really good. I use English when I'm in class, from 10.30am to 3.00pm. I live in the student village so after class, I continue to use English with my flatmates. I don't have any Kiwi friends outside*

*Polytechnic, I don't know why...[...]...Before I come here, many people tell me that going abroad to study is very lonely and boring, eating is bad and you have to do cooking by yourself. They say the shops close early so I feel upset before I come here. But I'm happy here. It is stressful in China. My parents are really good. They give me freedom and they support me financially. They do not put expectations on me. They allow me to do what I want. If I want to learn Art, so I learn Art. If I want to go to New Zealand, so I go to New Zealand.*

Not every participant had good experiences. Victor conveyed his disappointment when there was a mismatch between what was expected and what was experienced. However, his contradictory statements also contained certain paradoxes.

*This was my first overseas trip as I have not left my country before. I came alone and arrived Auckland Airport on 17 March 2012. My agent told me that Auckland is so comfortable, quiet and nice but I find it very boring. In Ho Chi Min City, there are lots of people, always noisy and the traffic is on different side of the road. Here, I like the greenery and no rush. I can just study and come back to my room. But it's so boring. I really miss my family and I'm homesick. There is nobody out at night here. I think everybody die off. But I would say that this polytechnic is good in teaching English.*

How individual participants compared his or her New Zealand experiences could be very personal, as shown in the narratives of Yoko, Kay and Kevin. Yoko, 32 years old, was the oldest participant and she used her savings to come to New Zealand. Yoko had visited New Zealand before and was more objective and more appreciative of her New Zealand experience.

*I'm over 30 years old, I think it is nice and relaxing here, not boring. I like slow pace because in Japan life is too busy. I'm overworked and I have no free time. I know it is strange but if the Japanese student is 18 years old, I won't recommend him to come to New Zealand because it is boring for young people here. Young people want to do more exciting things...[...]... I learned six years of English when I was a student in Japan. Almost all Japanese teachers teaching English and we just follow the textbooks*

*because teachers use Japanese to explain. Here, I think I have improved my English skills from 30% to 50%.*

Kay's good experience was because what she experienced matched her personal preference.

*I find my home-stay family very nice but I can't understand them because they speaking very fast. When my home-stay mum talks to me, she speaks very slowly and clearly. I am very lucky because my home-stay mum prepares vegetarian foods and she uses only organic stuff. Now I am healthier, happier and my skin is better than before.*

Kevin also reflected on the good food he had in his home-stay and showed a tinge of sadness that he had to return to Korea.

*My home-stay family is good and I have no plan to change my living place. My home-stay parents even make sticky rice for me. The most important thing is food and they are quite good. Most things are all right.....But, I have to go back to Korea in January 2013 to continue my university study.*

Kevin's account suggested that for him, his ability to transfer no expectations to positive experiences showed that the inter-relationship of expectations and experiences could be very fluid.

### **Key findings on participants' comparison between pre-course expectations and subsequent experiences**

The key finding was that all participants declared that their experiences in learning English far exceeded their pre-course expectations. When the participants made comparisons between their pre-course English proficiency with their self-rated English proficiency after studying in the CIE course, all of them agreed that on the average, their English proficiency had improved by more than 30%. On the other extreme, all the participants also declared that making friends with Kiwi people, other than members of their home-stay family, were difficult and close to impossible.

On the whole, most participants were satisfied as they had many positive experiences. However, there was generally no consensus on the match between

pre-course expectations and subsequent experience. This was because the participants' comparisons of experiences to expectations were based on their personal judgement and interpretation, and they varied between individuals. These key findings will be further examined and discussed in Chapter Five.

### **FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO FORMATION OF PRE-COURSE EXPECTATIONS**

Data from interviews revealed that most of the nine participants had tourist-oriented expectations based on the *100% Pure New Zealand* imageries that is heavily promoted by New Zealand tourism agencies. They did not seem to have more clear-cut, more specific and more demanding expectations. If there were any, they appeared vague and they were not too many variations on what to expect and the quality of their expectations. Most participants knew that their parents had paid a lump sum for their 10-week tuition and living expenses in New Zealand. Some participants were expected to return to their home countries after the short stays.

Interview data showed that different factors contributed to shaping and influencing participants' pre-course expectations. These expectations play important roles in linking participants' thoughts, responses, reactions and evaluation of their actual experience in New Zealand. Table 4.8 summarises the different factors.

**Table 4.8 : Different factors that influence pre-course expectations**

Participant	Personal Choice	Parental Influence	Agent's Influence	Friend's Influence	Other types of Influence
Carl	-	xxx	xxx	-	Christian faith
Victor	xxx	xxx	xxx	-	Internet
Kevin	-	xxx	xxx	-	none
Charles	xxx	xxx	x	-	internet
Carol	xx	x	xx	xxx	internet
Kay	xx	xx	xx	x	none
Vincent	xxx	xx	xx	x	internet
Yoko	xxx	x	x	x	Sister & sister's friend
Cindy	xx	xx	xx	-	internet

Symbols used included:

'xxx' strong influence

'xx' medium influence

'x' low influence

'-' nil influence

Even though most of the participants perceived that they made a personal choice in coming to New Zealand, parents and agents played a big role in influencing them. One good example was Cindy's experience.

*At first I didn't choose this polytechnic. I told my mother I want to go to another city but my mother said that place always problems, it's dangerous, you don't go. I said something like ok, and I come to this place.*

Victor, a student from Vietnam, had plans to study in USA but he finally had to follow his agent's recommendations.

*First, I plan to go to USA. My agent told me that US immigration wouldn't give out visa to students if US is the first study destination. The agent said I have to go to another country to study English first. The agent recommended New Zealand as a country that provides good English learning environment, especially in this polytechnic. The agent gave me a CD on this polytechnic. I watched and I showed it to my family and they thought that that was a good*

*idea. My agent asked me to study six months here, go back to my country and then apply for visa to go to USA. But now that I'm here, I have other plans, I may go to Australia.*

Victor's account showed the interplay of influence between parents and agent as agent's service depended on his parents' financial contribution. Victor had utmost respect for his parents. He believed that parents' sacrifice for children was in his Vietnamese culture as he was not aware of Confucian values.

*Confucius? I don't know. But in Vietnam, parents always take care of their children until they are married. There is one saying in my family: if you live until 99 years old, the parents take care of you for 98 years, and the remainder one year is for the parents to die.*

Carl's experience revealed his family's great dependence on the service of education agent to ensure entry to New Zealand education institution. Even though Carl had encountered unreliable agents he was quite forgiving probably because of his Christian faith.

*When I first came to New Zealand, the agent from China put me to study in a state school in the city. I was there for two semesters but I had to stop because the school found out that I was over nineteen years old. My parents asked the agent to change my study and the agent enrolled me in a college in another city. Before I changed school, I went back to China for a holiday. But three days before I left, the agent informed my parents that the college has stopped business. I had no time to do any application so my mother just found another new agent who delivered me to study in this polytechnic.*

Carl was also very vocal that Confucian-heritage was irrelevant in his upbringing.

*Actually, we only believe in our religion. No, no, we don't believe in Confucius. My parents love me just like God loves me. I love my family because we follow God.*

The information presented by Kevin reinforced that parents played key roles in their child's education. It also revealed the role of agent in the export education industry.

*I have to wait six months between finishing my military service and returning to study in my university in Seoul. My parents wanted me to use the time properly so they chose New Zealand and arranged with the agent everything. First, the agent recommended a university in the city, but it is more expensive so they asked me to come to this polytechnic.*

Kevin's comments impressed on the researcher that his parents decided on the CIE course as a 'gap time' to enrich their son's education experience. It showed how the important role his parents played in planning for the son and how Kevin respected their 'advice'. His narratives also expressed the interplay between influences from parents and agent, and his own 'compliance' to what he thought was best.

Carol was the only participant who stated that she based her expectations on a friend's influence. However, she needed to use an agent because she was not successful in her internet search.

*I look forward to the clean environment and good learning in New Zealand because my friend came to this polytechnic as a exchange student and she told me about New Zealand. I checked the internet twice but Chinese internet you are not allowed to search a lot. Luckily I have a good agent who delivered me to this polytechnic. Now, I can be with my friend.*

Yoko based her expectations on her sister and sister's friend's experience in New Zealand.

*I feel very stressed working in Japan. My sister and her friend who are working in New Zealand told me to join them to enjoy the peace and clean life here.*

Even though friend's influence played a minor role in pre-course expectation, once the participants came in New Zealand, friends could influence subsequent experiences. Charles, a student from China, reported that he had no autonomy to move out of his flatting situation because the accommodation was arranged between his parents' friends.

*My parents paid a lump sum for my 10-week CIE course in this polytechnic. I have to share a flat with the children of my parents' friends. I want to move out but I can't because my parents and their parents are good friend. My flatmates and I have to be friends also. I'm quite frustrated, really frustrated.*

Most participants declared that coming for the short intensive English course in New Zealand was their personal choice. The following statement by Charles was probably the most succinct and summed up the motivation behind personal choice.

*Because in China, students going overseas to study is like a fashion.*

### **Key findings on factors that contribute to formation of pre-course expectations**

Four main factors contribute to formation of pre-course expectations. They are:

- Personal choice
- Parental influence
- Education agent's influence
- Friend's influence.

Three participants stated that the internet influenced their pre-course expectations. One participant was influenced by her sister and her sister's friend, while one participant believed that his Christian faith was a factor.

The main finding was that the interplay of parents' support and agents' service had more influence over personal choice of participants in the formation of pre-course expectations. These issues will be examined and discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

### **CONCLUSION**

Research findings suggest that there were no obvious differences between pre-course expectations of participant from different Confucian-heritage countries. Participants assessed their experience by comparing them with their pre-course expectations which in turn were shaped by information they received from parents, agents, friends and others. Mis-information resulted in some cultural and



emotional shocks later. When this occurred, the gap between expectations and experience persisted during their stay in New Zealand.

Generally, there was no consensus on the match between pre-course expectations and subsequent experience. Some participants compared and contrasted pre-course expectations and expectations from their own perspectives, preferences, and paradoxical conceptualizations Kevin who came without any pre-course expectations reported that he had all positive experiences in New Zealand. Some participants with almost the same pre-course expectations reported that they had a different quality of experience. However, participants whose pre-course expectations were closer to reality reported more positive experiences when they were in New Zealand. The findings presented in this chapter now lead to the discussion in Chapter Five.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the significance of the findings in Chapter Four. It discusses findings on pre-course expectations, subsequent experiences versus pre-course expectations, and factors influencing formation of pre-course expectations. The findings will be discussed with reference to the literature and will highlight similarities and difference in relation to the literature review in Chapter Two.

### **PRE-COURSE EXPECTATIONS**

Research findings showed that before the participants commenced their study in New Zealand, their 'self-predictions' on expectations included four main themes: imagery of New Zealand, imagery of the New Zealand education institution, dreams of their learning journey and imagery of personal emotions in New Zealand. The participants were able to articulate their expectations in a specific and aware manner (Brinch, 2011). Coming to New Zealand was the first overseas trip for six out of the nine participants and their worldviews were limited by this lack of experience (Marriot, du Plessis, & Pu, 2010). Consequently, most of them depended on assumptions to inform their imageries and they experienced expectation gaps (Marriot, du Plessis, & Pu, 2010).

Research findings in Chapter Four showed that imagery of New Zealand as a country that is clean, green, happy, safe, and friendly were utmost in the participants' expectations. This imagery of New Zealand related closely to tourist-oriented expectations. Since most participants had not been to New Zealand before, they used touristy-information to inform their expectations. This corresponds to research of Carr, Gibson and Robinson (2001) who comment that people use sets of stable assumptions to inform their expectations. Most participants also expected New Zealand to be an expensive country.

Participants expected that the New Zealand education institution would provide good learning, good teachers and good environment for them to interact with Kiwi friends. Participants' expectations of making friends with Kiwi people

matched similar findings found in other research (Ward & Masgoret, 2004; Ho et al., 2007; Ministry of education, 2007a).

A theme from participants' expectation of their learning journey revealed that they had high expectations of their CIE course, especially in improving their English speaking and listening skills. This level of expectation aligned with the findings reported in Bailey's study (2009). Most participants had no plans to obtain a certificate or to study for IELTS because they were on short-term stays.

Imagery of participants' personal emotions in New Zealand showed that most participants expected that they would be happy, would enjoy life in New Zealand, would be lucky, would make good use of their opportunity and would have lots of personal freedom while they were in New Zealand. These emotions reflected their life aspirations and motivations in New Zealand. Moreover, as fee-paying international students, they would surely expect to enjoy themselves.

### **SUBSEQUENT EXPERIENCES VERSUS PRE-COURSE EXPECTATIONS**

One key finding in Chapter Four was that all the participants expressed great progress in their English proficiency. On the average, all the participants rated a more than 30% improvement when they made comparisons between their pre-course English proficiency with their self-rated English proficiency after studying in the CIE course. This great improvement further enhanced their quest to learn, to improve and to master the English language. Many articulated proudly that they could speak better English and agreed that they had improved their ability to listen and to understand the English that was spoken by other Kiwi people. This finding aligned closely to the research of Bordia et al (2006) who believe that the fulfilment of student's learning expectations affects their motivation in a positive manner. The participants were also very confident that their New Zealand experience would be of benefit. They believed that their improved English proficiency would make them more marketable. A better command of English would contribute to them getting a better job that would also benefit their families. This is supported by the work of Ho, Holmes, and Cooper (2004) who stated that the primary focus of Confucian values on education is that education is an

important means of personal development and is desirable for the perfection of the self and the benefit of the wider society.

Most participants enjoyed their experience studying English in the polytechnic and some particularly liked the classroom activities and the way their teachers taught in class. This is supported by the work of Li (2004) who suggests that some students like the interactive teaching styles in New Zealand. Most participants expressed satisfaction with their learning experiences at Kia ora Polytechnic, which closely resembled the research of Ho et al (2007) who found that generally Chinese international students were satisfied with their educational experiences. Many participants reported that they were impressed by the many facilities, fantastic library and the huge campus. All these findings were similar to research of Campbell and Li (2008) that positive experiences of Asian students were related to high-quality education, practical programmes and favourable learning environments. Most participants were happy that they could count on the personnel in the International Office to socially and academically support them. This finding indicated the positive effects of the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students (Ministry of Education, 2011c). The participants reported that the fulfilment of these expectations assisted them to cope positively with their transition from home to New Zealand so that they would have a better quality of life and hence, to enjoy a better learning experience.

Most participants enjoyed the clean and green, serene and safe environment of New Zealand. One participant, Vincent, became fed-up when life here turned into a routine and the clean environment ceased to be an attraction. This is similar to the findings of Ho et al (2007) who comment about mismatch between anticipation and actual experience of Chinese students.

Paradoxically, Victor found life in New Zealand very boring despite expressing that he liked the 'no rush' lifestyle here. Yoko, however, liked the slow pace and instead, felt that life was relaxing here. Hence, some participants seemed better at managing the paradoxes of '*New Zealand is a quiet country but not a boring country*' while others equated the slow pace here to a '*dead place*'. This finding is supported by the research of Campbell and Li (2008). Moreover, the

participants' comparison of experiences to expectations were based on their personal judgement and interpretation, and sometimes, on their personal preferences. Hence even though pre-course expectations were quite similar, there were differences in how they interpreted their experiences. The narratives of the participants also revealed that even though their pre-course expectations sounded similar, there were nuances in the similarity. Hence, the experiences of international students could also vary because they had different nuances of expectations before commencing study (Holloway, 2004).

Some participants were aware that there would not be Kiwi students in their English language class because Kiwi students are native speakers. Many, however, were surprised that most of their classmates were their co-nationals. Contrary to their pre-course expectations, most of the participants pointed out that they had not made any Kiwi friends in the polytechnic or outside. The majority of the participants wanted to make friends with New Zealand students and other Kiwi people but they faced significant difficulties in this area. The same dilemma was reported in other research studies (Ward & Masgoret, 2004; Ministry of Education, 2007a; Ho et al, 2007). The difficulty for CHC international students to befriend Kiwi students was a multi-faceted problem because of the differences in language, culture, personality and interests. This finding was supported by Ho et al (2007) who comment that many international students believe that domestic students are not interested in getting to know them. For the great majority of participants, their circle of friends was confined to their classmates and flatmates and they had very little contacts with local Kiwi people. This study confirms early research findings that Asian students in New Zealand had difficulty making friends with Kiwi people (Campbell & Li, 2008; Ho et al, 2007, Ward & Masgoret, 2004; Ministry of Education, 2007a). Interacting with local Kiwi people will quicken the process of cultural adaptation and enrich their New Zealand experience.

Participants who lived in home-stay situations found making friends with Kiwi people easier because they were constantly in contact with other members of their Kiwi host family. The participants living with home-stay families said that they would recommend that more international students should do likewise

because they were able to learn Kiwi culture, to socialise with other Kiwis and had speedier progress in their English skill. This finding was consistent with Tran (2012) who comments on the benefits of social interaction with home-stay hosts. During their stay in New Zealand, some participants had to move to cheaper accommodation, had to walk to Kia ora Polytechnic instead of using public transport and had to return home once their student visa expired. This move appeared to be a form of conservation of resources. Even though most participants were financially well supported, most were budget-conscious. They knew the advantages of living with a home-stay family but realised that flatting out was a much cheaper option.

Reflecting on their experiences, most participants said that positive experiences far exceeded their prior expectations. Many hoped that they could continue to study and live in New Zealand. However, even though Kia ora Polytechnic provided pastoral support (Ministry of Education, 2003) to international students via the International Students Office, most participants did not seek extra help probably because they were here only for a short course. For most participants, reality matched their pre-course expectations and they would recommend friends to come to study in New Zealand.

### **FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE FORMATION OF PRE-COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND SUBSEQUENT EXPERIENCES**

Findings from Chapter Four showed that personal choice, parental influence, education agent's influence and friend's influence were important factors that shaped the formation of pre-course expectations. Research findings from Ministry of Education (2011e) showed that international students came to study in New Zealand based on influence from friends, agents, information from institution's website and parents. However, research data on the factors influencing pre-course expectations of Confucian-heritage international students were limited.

One key finding from Chapter Four was that it was not one factor, but a combination of parental support, education agent's service and personal choice that led to the formation of participants' pre-course expectations. A few

participants stated that information from the internet played minor role in influencing their prior expectations. Yoko, the Japanese student, expected a less stressful life in New Zealand because of feedback from her sister and her sister's friend. Carl was the only participant who strongly believed that his Christian faith influenced his pre-course expectations.

Factors that helped shape participants pre-course expectations continued to play a role to determine the fulfilment of their expectations. One participant, Victor, received erroneous information from his education agents. That resulted in Victor forming unrealistic expectations and there was a mismatch between his pre-course expectation and subsequent experience. This finding agreed with the research of Ho et al (2007) who revealed that inaccurate information provided by agents and other sources resulted in a dissonance in international students' expectations. Victor blamed his education agent for 'wrong information' because the agent told him that '*Auckland is so comfortable, quiet and nice*'. The researcher found that both Victor and his education agent were correct. It was a case of interpretation, the level of comparison and the level of personal preference. This is a significant finding and the researcher has to be discerning when carrying out this qualitative-interpretivist research.

Another participant, Kevin, articulated that he did not have any pre-course expectations. He also expressed his great satisfaction with this CIE course. Probably, when an international student comes to attend a short-term course in New Zealand without any prior, pre-set and perceived expectations, and without any form of assumptions, any experience is a good experience.

### **Parental Influence**

Eight of out the nine participants reported that they benefited from financial and moral support from their parents. Without their parents' financial support, these young adults who had not started working would not have the means to pay for the fees, the travel cost and their living expenses. Eight participants who came with full financial backing from their parents reported that their parents influenced them to study abroad and they were happy to take up their parents' offer. This finding illustrated that Confucian values were motivating both parents and

children in the family relationship, as reported by other researchers (Huang & Gove, 2012; Ho, 1994; Tran, 2012). Most participants in this research appreciated their parents' support. They felt that they needed to study hard in class, performed well academically, and they led a disciplined life in New Zealand to show their appreciation for their parents' sacrifice. Their good behaviours are consistent with the Confucian ethics of filial piety (Ho, 1994).

Generally, parents who encouraged children to embark on overseas education were prepared financially to support their children's learning journey and emotional well-being. Financial stability was a critical influencing factor especially in connection to the participants' learning journey and emotional well-being in New Zealand. Financial support and unconditional love from parents helped the participants to cope positively with activities in New Zealand. Most of the participants were able to articulate the date they first arrived New Zealand as well as the date they had to return. The participants knew the duration they would stay in New Zealand because their stays here were contingent on money from their parents.

The narratives of the participants indicated that not all of them were rich. Two participants had to move from home-stay arrangement to flatting in order to cut down their expenses. Three participants walked several kilometres to and from the polytechnic. Many of them spent all their time on their study. They lived frugally and they were very aware that their families faced considerable financial burden to finance their New Zealand study. This reflects the pervasive influence of cognitive socialisation in Confucian traditions (Ho, 1994; Yao, 2000).

The majority of the participants aimed to be successful adults so that they would be able to reciprocate their parents' kindness. Some participants said that they have a duty to take care of their parents in the future. These statements appeared to reveal that most participants were deeply embedded in their Confucian traditions that emphasise collectivism of a family system and de-emphasise individualism of self (Ho, 1994). In this way, Confucian traditions promote and sustain parental influence.



From the data collected from participants, it appears that even though the entire New Zealand study was 'offered' to them by their parents, the participants still had a choice to pick and choose and to decide what should be in the package deal. It was obvious that parents were committed to the happiness of their children. As highlighted in several narratives, parents would not force their children if that was not their children's choice.

Most parents believed that overseas education was of quality and a good education could ensure a better future for their children (Lam, 2002). However, from the data collected from the participants, they indicated that their parents chose New Zealand because it was cheaper, environmentally clean, safe and easier for their children to get into the education institutions. This finding was quite similar to findings of other researchers (Aston, 1996; Ward & Masgoret, 2004, as cited in Collins, 2006, p.219).

One unexpected finding was that many participants consciously stated that they did not know much about Confucianism and they did not believe that their parents' financial supports were because of Confucian values. The majority of the participants believed that it is the nature of parents to care for their children. Some participants argued that Confucian values did not play a role in their lives. Such viewpoints challenged Confucian values and the perceptions of Confucian-heritage students. This finding was significant because it contradicted the works of several researchers ((Huang & Gove, 2012; Ho, 1994; Tran, 2012).

Most participants recognised the sacrifices made by their parents and appreciated their social and financial support. They felt a sense of obligation to repay their parents and to support their well-being in the future. Their sense of duty and deep filial piety towards their family were common characteristics among the participants in this study. All these narratives fitted the culture of Confucian-heritage (Ho, 1994, Tran, 2012; Yao, 2000). Hence, the researcher found that it was very challenging to make sense of why many participants consciously articulated that Confucian values did not play a role in their lives yet still assessed their personal expectations and experiences from the insights that are closely related to Confucian values.

Upon deeper reflections on the narratives of the participants, the researcher realised that the majority of the participants were subconsciously aware of their Confucian-heritage but did not agree with the one size fits all mould of Confucian values on themselves. Paton and Henry (2009) stated that 'literature on East Asian business ethical practices reveals an inordinate focus on Confucian values' (p. 276). They also commented that it was overly simplistic to equate present day East Asian values with only Confucian values because it neglects the interplay of other cultures and various other philosophical threads in the East Asian values over the last millennium (Paton & Henry, 2009).

Hence, it was an oversimplification on the part of the researcher to assume that the special relationship between parents-children and the importance of education in the lives of CHC international students must be based solely on Confucian values. Life aspirations and motivations can be self-determined and innate, and not influenced by extrinsic factors. Youngsters from Confucian-heritage background are now exposed to social media and waves of cultural globalisation. They may still think in Confucian ways and display Confucian traits but may consider that Confucianism is an old ideology and reject any stereotypical association to it.

### **Agent's Influence**

Research finding in Chapter Four showed that all participants used the service of education agents to enrol in the CIE course in Kia ora Polytechnic. In the process, agents' suggestions and recommendations inevitably influenced participants' pre-course expectations.

Education agents helped the participants to apply for their course of study in the institution. Agents also arranged for student visas, travel and accommodation. For some participants, their agents even arranged for their airport pickup and transfer to accommodation. Education agencies have become a one-stop shop for some participants to obtain a privileged and direct way to secure entry to Kia ora Polytechnic. This was consistent with Collins (2012a) who commented that

education agents occupy a pivotal position as intermediaries between international students and New Zealand export education industries

For most of the participants, their parents had pre-paid both their tuition fees and accommodation expenses in one lump sum to the education agents. In return, the agents arranged school placement, student visa and accommodation. Despite the trust, not all participants had good experience with the service of the agents. Carl had encounters with an unreliable agent while Yoko had to change her education agent because of the bad service provided. These incidents revealed that some agents were fraudulent (Laxon, 2012; Cowlshaw, 2012). For Victor, his pre-course expectations were influenced by his agent and there was a gap in what he actually experienced in New Zealand. Hence inaccurate information from agents could result in mismatch between pre-course expectations and reality (Ho, et al., 2007).

### **Personal Choice**

Most participants declared that coming for the short intensive English course in New Zealand was their personal choice. However, from their narratives, their choice was not truly independent, rather, it was dependent and closely related to their parents' moral and financial support. Many participants were willing to accept their parents' money, respect their parents' views and then align their wishes to their parents' wishes and advice. This process appears to be closely related to the Confucian values of how an individual exists in collectivist cultures (Ho, 1994; Yao, 2000).

However, personal choice is not dependent on parent's financial support alone. The majority of the participants used the service of the education agents. For two participants, Carl and Kevin, their parents personally contacted the agents. In the case of Victor, even though his parents had the financial means, policies relating to certain student visa conditions had to be clarified by his education agent. This was consistent with the important role played by education agents as reported in the research by Collins (2012a). Hence, the interplay of parents' support and agent's service had a strong influence over personal choice of participants in the formation of pre-course expectations.

### **Friends' and other influences**

A few participants were influenced by their friends. Friends' influence became stronger once participants were in New Zealand. Prior to coming to New Zealand, only one participant, Carol, was influenced to follow a friend to New Zealand.

The relationship between individuals and friends indicates the value of kinship in Confucian teachings. Charles, a student from China, reported that he had no autonomy to move out of his flatting situation because the accommodation was arranged between his parents' friends. This reflected how his flatting relationships were guided by roles that were set out in the Confucian tradition (Yao, 2000).

Information from the internet played a small role in influencing participants' prior expectations because of language barriers and the restricted internet freedom in some of their home countries. Carl was the only participant who said that his Christian faith influenced every aspect of his life. Carl came to New Zealand with the initial expectation that *"I think all the white people and I will be one big family"* was surprised that he hardly met white people in church and that the priest was a *"black people"*.

### **CONCLUSION**

This chapter has examined, reflected on and discussed the findings reported in Chapter Four. For the nine participants in Kia ora Polytechnic's CIE course, they went through a period of planning, imagining and upon arrival in New Zealand, a period of transitioning to the new country and then transitioning back to their home countries. Generally, all the participants were aware of the behind-the-scene efforts and roles of the many players like parents, agents and friends, who contributed to their pre-course expectations and their actual learning journeys.

Participants' narratives revolved around parental influences on their learning choices and their pre-course expectations. All the participants used the service of education agents. The use of agents enabled them not only to get their student

visas which gave them a secure entry to the polytechnic, but agents also organised their travel and accommodation needs. Every participant made an individual choice in coming to study in New Zealand but there was a complex interplay between roles of parents and agents in shaping their personal choice and hence, their pre-course expectations and subsequent experiences.

All the participants were very satisfied with the improvement of their English proficiency, and self-rated that on the average, their English proficiency had improved by more than 30%. On other aspects of pre-course expectations versus subsequent experiences, participants' comparisons were based on personal interpretation, preferences and occasional paradoxes, and they varied between individuals.

Unexpectedly, most participants rejected that Confucian values were relevant in their lives. Most participants denied that their parents' financial support was a result of Confucian values even though the participants themselves displayed many Confucian traits that were consistent with Confucian values. This is a significant finding for the researcher. The researcher realised that it was incorrect and inappropriate to assume that the Confucian value system was the only force motivating this cohort of Confucian-heritage international students. The researcher realised that it is an over-simplification to assume 'all things Confucius', instead the narratives of the participants indicated a complex interplay of East Asian value system.

Chapter Six will summarise the research findings, discuss the implications of the research findings, suggest some recommendations for future research and practice. It will outline the limitations of the study and end with some concluding comments

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

### INTRODUCTION

This research study drew on a sample of nine international students from China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan who attended the 10-week CIE course in Kia ora Polytechnic. The research explored these students' pre-course expectations and whether their actual experiences in New Zealand matched their pre-course expectations. Factors that influenced students' pre-course expectations and their subsequent experiences were also examined. It is hoped that this research would contribute to academic knowledge and to further research in the future. This research was a journey of self-discovery, prompted by the researcher's own Confucian roots, interests and experiences. This chapter presents a summary of the research findings, research implications, recommendations, limitations of the study and a conclusion.

### RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS

#### Research aim

The aim of the research is to explore the pre-course expectations of a cohort of international students from China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan who are attending a 10-week CIE course Kia ora Polytechnic. The study also investigates factors influencing pre-course expectations and subsequent experiences, and whether their expectations are fulfilled.

#### Research Questions

1. What pre-course expectations do CHC international students from China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan have before they commence their CIE course at Kia ora Polytechnic?
2. How do these international students' subsequent experiences compare with their pre-course expectations?
3. What factors influence the formation of their pre-course expectations and subsequent experiences?

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

### **Pre-course expectations**

This study found that participants had four main pre-course expectations. First, they expected New Zealand to be a clean, green, happy, safe, and friendly country but, living costs would be expensive. Second, they expected to have good learning, good teachers and good environment to interact with Kiwi friends, hence they had to pay competitive tuition fees. Third, they expected a great learning journey where they would improve their English proficiency in the four components: reading, writing, speaking and listening. Lastly, they expected that they would enjoy life in New Zealand: be happy, free, lucky, and would make good use of the opportunity.

### **Subsequent experiences versus pre-course expectations**

All the participants declared that their experiences in learning English far exceeded their pre-course expectations. The key finding was that when the participants made comparisons between their pre-course English proficiency with their self-rated English proficiency after studying in the CIE course, all of them agreed that on the average, their English proficiency had improved by more than 30%. At the other extreme, all the participants also declared that making friends with Kiwi people, other than members of their home-stay families, was difficult and close to impossible.

On the whole, participants were satisfied as they had many positive experiences. However, there was generally no consensus on the match between pre-course expectations and subsequent experiences. This is because the participants' comparison of experiences to expectations were based on their personal judgements, their interpretations, certain personal preferences and occasional paradoxes. Hence, the match between pre-course expectations and subsequent experiences varied between individuals.

### **Factors that contribute to formation of pre-course expectations**

Most participants had not travelled out of their home countries before. Therefore these participants formed their pre-course expectations based on outside

information that they received directly or indirectly. Four main factors contributed to formation of pre-course expectations: personal choice, parental influence, education agent's influence and friend's influence. Other influences played minor roles. Four participants stated that internet influenced their pre-course expectations; one participant was influenced by her sister and her sister's friend, while one participant believed that his Christian faith was a factor.

The participants' pre-course expectations were not formed because of one influence alone. The interplay of parents' support and agent's service had more influence over personal choice of participants in the formation of pre-course expectations.

### **IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS**

International students coming to study English in New Zealand pay hefty tuition fees to the education institutions. Their tuition fees significantly contribute to the revenues of the institutions. The money these students spent on living costs also contribute to the economy of the country. Positive experiences in New Zealand can motivate them to become goodwill ambassadors but any bad experience can have lingering negative impacts. Findings from this research will enable providers to understand the main reasons for the match between students' pre-course expectations and their actual experiences in New Zealand. Findings from this research will also enable education providers to find ways to narrow the expectancy gap, if there is a mismatch.

All the participants used the service and expertise of education agents to secure entry to study in New Zealand. They generally used off-shore education agents based in their home countries. However, not all education agents were knowledgeable or trustworthy. The implication of this finding is that education agents that are reliable and trustworthy will help enhance enrolment of international students to New Zealand and should be supported by New Zealand export education industry while questionable education agents should be vetted.

This study found that all the participants had articulated that they had improved their English proficiency that far exceeded their pre-course expectations. While



participants' great academic satisfaction is good news to New Zealand education and the reputation of the polytechnic, it implies that there is still room for improvement. The polytechnic needs to continuously upgrade its internationalisation strategies and to provide quality assurance for its English courses. Continuous positive changes will ensure that students from other parts of the world will be attracted to study in New Zealand and will choose this polytechnic as their first choice of study destination.

One implication from this research is that even though participants were on short-term stays, they wanted to make friends with Kiwi students. However, all the participants encountered great difficulties and were unable to make any Kiwi friends, other than members of their home-stay families. Some strategies are needed to help international students in friendship building and socialization with the local community. Having friends with Kiwi people will give these students a sense of belonging and enrich their New Zealand experience.

This research found that many participants consciously stated that they did not know much about Confucianism and that Confucian values did not play a role in their lives. Many of them they did not believe that their parents' financial support for them was because of core Confucian values underlying education. They believed that it is the nature of parents to love and take care of their children. Despite all the denials, the majority of the participants still assessed their personal expectations and experiences from insights that are closely related to Confucian values. This contradiction implies that in the minds of the participants, there were departures from Confucianism but there were also new identities and continuities with the traditions of their countries and their families. Cultural and parental attitude consciously or unconsciously inculcate in the children. It is pretentious for the researcher to assume that it was Confucianism. It implies that research has to listen to the voices of the research participants, not to ignore them.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings and the implications of this research have highlighted potential areas for future research and where practice can be improved.

## Research

Future research could aim to replicate and extend this present study to other levels of CHC English learners in CIE courses. In future research, it would be particularly interesting to consider how the four factors of personal choice, parental influence, agents' influence and friends' influence on formation of pre-course expectations potentially impact on the experiences of other sub-groups such as those CHC international students attending four-year university course. There are reasons to believe that compared with CHC international students who pursue four year university course, students who pursue short courses are not too particular about their pre-course expectations and experiences since they only have short-term plans. Future work could investigate older CHC international students who had higher disposable financial resources versus those who depend fully on parents' financial support. They would probably have different views of expectations and responses to their lived experiences. It would also be interesting to study international students of different ethnic groups to find out whether their parents' willingness to invest time and money on their children's overseas education was a reflection of good parenthood or was it only a strictly Confucian cultural practice.

Future research could explore the roles, responsibilities and impact of education agents in determining the success of New Zealand export industry. Future research could study the interplay between pre-course information provided by education agents and how this information shapes students' subsequent experiences.

One key finding from this research was the difficulty for CHC international students to befriend Kiwi students and be part of the local community. This is a multi-faceted problem and more research on this topic is needed.

This research studied the expectations and experiences of CHC international students. It did not focus on the rationale behind CHC parents' willingness to financially support their children. Although most CHC international students disregarded the influence of Confucian values, the practice of Confucian-heritage

emerged as a constant yet subtle thread in their interviews. More research on connecting or disputing Confucian cultural meanings to education would be useful.

### **Practice**

In order to attract more non-English speaking international students to study English in New Zealand, there were areas where practice could be improved. Some participants made comments that fees were charged on a weekly rate. Strategies like discount for paying up-front fees for two semester studies would be an added attraction for students to have a longer study here.

The main views that emerged in participants' interview were that they harboured considerable pre-course expectations on how life in New Zealand would be. Even though there was no quantifiable impact on quality of life when their expectations were matched by their subsequent experiences, there was an impact whenever the experiences fell short of these expectations. The relationship between pre-course expectations and subsequent experiences has to be managed well. Education providers, marketers, advertisers and agents need to reflect on such concerns in order to better understand what New Zealand education means to CHC international students. This understanding will enable New Zealand export education to resonate better with their target groups of international students.

The polytechnic needs to develop a range of strategies to encourage friendship building and interaction between non-English speaking international students and English-speaking Kiwi students. This will give opportunities for English learners to communicate with the Kiwi students, enhance intercultural understanding and enrich their New Zealand experience.

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

One limitation of this study was its scope. The findings came from nine participants. The sample of participants was limited in that it predominantly consisted of students who readily self-select, and who enjoyed the course. They generally painted rosy narratives of their New Zealand experiences. The

researcher was informed by the CIE course co-ordinators about attrition among CHC international students. There was also anecdotal evidence of miserable experiences of some CHC international students in CIE courses. However, in this research, there was no representation from the group of international students who struggled and might have bitter experience in New Zealand. This indicated that the findings of the research were probably biased towards students who had positive experiences.

A second limitation in this research study was that this research used a qualitative-interpretivist research methodology. There was great reliance on students' narratives in the research interviews and the researcher's own interpretation of them. In addition, the interviews and transcripts were conducted by the researcher alone and it was unavoidable that in this study, a certain degree of subjectivity could have happened. It would be more objective if another co-researcher was also involved in doing the same study.

### **CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

Despite limitations of the current research, findings of this research will shed light on understanding Confucian-heritage international students as a particular group of English language learners in New Zealand. This research explores pre-course expectations and experiences from the students' perspective and adds the voices of Confucian-heritage international students to the competitive New Zealand export education sector. Data from this research will inform future research and contribute new knowledge to research literature. Most importantly, findings from this research challenge the Confucian ideals and provide a different lens for understanding the complexity of East Asian value system.

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## APPENDICES



## PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET Appendix A

**Title of Thesis**

**From pre-course expectations to subsequent learning experiences: a study of Confucian-heritage international students' perspectives on an intensive English course in one New Zealand polytechnic**

My name is Lee Mui Choong. I am currently enrolled in the Master of Education degree in the Department of Education at Unitec New Zealand and seek your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aims of my research are to study the initial learning expectations of international students from China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan before they commence study in the Certificate of Intensive English programme (CIE programme) at Kia ora Polytechnic, factors that influence the formation of their initial expectations and the students' subsequent learning experiences at Kia ora Polytechnic.

I request your participation in the following way:

I will be collecting data using a face to face interview of approximately 60 minutes duration. Interviews will be conducted individually in the study room located at the Kia ora Polytechnic Library. The interview will be conducted in English at a time that is mutually suitable. I will explain the aims of the research and how the interview will be carried out before you sign the consent form. I will also seek your informed consent for the use of a digital voice recorder.

The information collected from you will be used solely for this research. I will provide you with a transcript for checking before data analysis is started. All interviews will be voluntary and interview data will be kept completely confidential. No names will be mentioned and the information will be coded.

Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the Thesis. All information collected from you will be stored in a password protected file and only you, my supervisor and I will have access to this information.

I hope that you will agree to take part and that you will find your involvement interesting. If you have any queries about the research, you may contact my supervisor at Unitec New Zealand.

My supervisor is Dr Sophie Alcock and she can be contacted by (Details removed).

Yours sincerely

Lee Mui Choong

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2012-1053

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from July 2012 to July 2013. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.





## Appendix B

### CONSENT FORM

**Research event:** Individual face to face interview  
**Researcher:** Lee Mui Choong  
**Programme:** Master of Education

#### Title of Thesis

**From pre-course expectations to subsequent learning experiences: a study of Confucian-heritage international students' perspectives on an intensive English course in one New Zealand polytechnic**

I have been given and have understood the explanation of this research. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that neither my name nor the name of my organisation will be used in any public reports. Hence, my participation will be completely voluntary.

I understand that I will be provided with a transcript for checking before data analysis begins.

I am aware that I may withdraw myself or any information that has been provided for this research up to the stage when analysis of data has been completed.

I agree to the audio recording of my interview. Yes  No

**I agree to take part in this project.**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email address:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### **UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2012-1053**

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from July 2012 to July 2013. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

## Appendix C

**INTERVIEW GUIDE****Title of Thesis**

**From pre-course expectations to subsequent learning experiences: a study of Confucian-heritage international students' perspectives on an intensive English course in one New Zealand polytechnic**

Note: The following are key questions to guide the in-depth interview process. There will be freedom in how questions are asked. The interview follows a semi-structures interview format. Questions are indicative of areas to be covered during the interview. Informal, friendlier and gentler words will be used when interviewing the participants. This interview guide will be used in a flexible manner and the order of the questions will vary depending on individual circumstances. The estimated time for each interview is 60 to 90 minutes.

**Clarifying questions**

- Can you expand a little on this?
- Can you tell me anything else?
- Can you give me some examples?

**Probe questions**

- Would you give me an example?
- Can you elaborate on that idea?
- Would you explain that further?
- I'm not sure I understand what you're saying.
- Is there anything else?

**Background questions**

What is your name?

Which country do you come from?

Tell me a little about .....

When did you come to New Zealand?

Did you come alone? How did you feel when you first arrived?

When did you start the CIE course?

Is this your first time leaving your home country?

What other countries have you been to?

Have you studied English in any other foreign country before coming to New Zealand?

**Questions related to English studies**

How many languages do you speak?

What was the first foreign language you learned?

How did you learn English when you were in your country?

How do you rate your own English proficiency before you come to New Zealand?

How do you rate your English proficiency now?

Why do you want to learn English in New Zealand?

Are you returning to your home country after the 10-week course?

Will you continue to study? Where?

**Research Questions**

1. What pre-course expectations do CHC international students from China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan have before they commence their CIE course at Kia ora Polytechnic?

2. How do these international students' subsequent experiences compare with their pre-course expectations?
3. What factors influence the formation of their pre-course expectations and subsequent experiences?

**PART 1: Research question 1**

What pre-course expectations do CHC international students from China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan have before they commence their CIE course at Kia ora Polytechnic?

**Research Objective**

To construct a list of expectations from the narrative of the participants.

**Main interview questions related to research question 1**

***Introduction:** For the first part of my research, my questions will focus on the **PAST**, when you were still in your home country*

1. When you were young, did you have plans/wishes/dreams that you would like to study overseas? Which country was your first choice?
2. Why did you choose New Zealand?
3. Do you know about New Zealand before you come here?
4. You did not know about New Zealand before, so what did you expect you will see/hear/do in New Zealand?
5. Since you did not know about New Zealand, how did you think you would feel when you arrive and had to stay here for ten weeks?
6. Who informed you about the English course in New Zealand?

7. Why did you choose Kia ora Polytechnic? Why the CIE course in particular?
8. What did you know about Kia ora Polytechnic and the CIE course? (refer to answer in Q.8)?
9. How do you apply/enrol at Kia ora Polytechnic? Did you apply on-line?
10. This question is a bit sensitive, but did you know how much you have to pay for the tuition fees and living expenses?
11. Since you were not working then, who paid all these money?
12. Why did you think they were so willing to pay so much money for you to come to New Zealand for a short intensive English course?
13. What were your expectations (or self-predictions) about studying English in New Zealand?
14. You came to New Zealand to study intensive English, is that all you were expected to do in New Zealand?
15. Did you have any special areas of English that you want to learn in New Zealand?
16. Did you plan to prepare for ILETS? To get a certificate from New Zealand? To continue your study for a degree in a New Zealand university?
17. What other expectations (or self-predictions) did you have concerning you study in New Zealand?
18. What other expectations did you have concerning your life in New Zealand?

19. Did you expect to have a lot of friends here?

20. Do you have any other expectations besides all that we had talked about?

### **Part 2: Research question 2**

How do these international students' subsequent experiences compare with their pre-course expectations?

#### **Research Objective**

To find out students' views of their lived experiences and compare to their pre-course expectations. To explore the events which best illustrate the interplay between expectations and experiences

### **Main interview questions related to research question 2**

**Introduction:** *For the second part of my research, my questions will focus on NOW. Now that you are at Kia ora Polytechnic and attending the CIE course*

1. When did you arrive New Zealand?
2. When did you start to attend the CIE course?
3. When you first arrive the City Airport, how did you feel? Was there anyone waiting for you?
4. How are you finding (or interpreting) your experiences now?

Note:

*Note1: I have to keep prompting or reminding the participant on what he had mentioned earlier about his pre-course expectations.*

*Note2: I have to encourage the participant to elaborate in- depth his/her experiences*

5. In your opinion, how do your experiences now compare to your pre-course expectations?
6. What are the experiences that you did not initially expect? Better or worse?
7. How do you rate your English proficiency on the first day you arrived New Zealand compare to now?
8. How do you rate your life now (as compared to when you were in your home country)? How about your happiness level?
9. How about your learning journey? How do you find your CIE course, your teachers? The campus? Your friends?
10. Compare to what your pre-course expectations on learning English, how do you find your experience now?
11. In your opinion, is there a match or mismatch between your pre-course expectations? Are there any incidences or events in your current situation that inspired/impacted/affected/disappointed you the most?
12. In your opinion, how satisfied are you with your experiences at Kia ora Polytechnic? Why? Are enjoying your time here? Are you unhappy here? Do you have any regrets? Or you have any advice to future students from your country?
13. Is there any experience here that impress you the most? Is there anything that frustrate you the most?
14. Do you want to continue your study here?
15. Is there anything that could have made your experience here better?

16. Do you think you will recommend students from your home country to study English at Kia ora Polytechnic? Why?

**PART 3 : Research question 3**

What factors influence the formation of their pre-course expectations and subsequent experiences?

**Research Objective**

To investigate factors and dynamics that contribute to the formation of pre-course expectations even before they commence study in New Zealand. To find out what factors shape their subsequent experiences.

**Main interview questions related to research question 3**

**Introduction:** *This is the third part of my research, and my questions will focus on what have influenced your initial expectations when you are still in your home country, i.e. **before you come to New Zealand***

1. Referring to your expectation of (refer to Research Question 1) .....Why did you have these expectations?
2. What other factors contributed to you having these expectations .....  
(participant's answer for Q.1) ?
3. Concerning your second and third expectations, what events/ information/ people influenced these expectations?
4. What do you think is the most important influence on all your expectations?
5. Are these people or influences the same groups that support and provide for your study at Kia ora Polytechnic?
6. In your opinion, are these influences a cultural thing (things that people in your community/society/country are practising)?
7. Why are these influences considered 'cultural things'?



8. In your opinion, do you have a name for this culture?
9. Do you think that most people in your community/society/country practise this 'culture'?
10. Are there other factors (that you've witnessed/heard about) that influenced your pre-course expectations?
11. Referring to your comment about the fulfilment of expectations (in Research Question 2), what factors shape the fulfilment of your experiences now that you are studying in the polytechnic?
12. Do you want to add any further points to our discussion?

**Concluding question:** Do you have any other comments for Kia ora Polytechnic? Any comments to future students from your country? Any other comments?

*Thank you very much for your valuable time to contribute informative information, answers, and comments to this interview.*

**INFORMATION SHEET****Appendix D****For Gaining Access to the Department of Language Studies, Kia ora Polytechnic****Title of Thesis**

**From pre-course expectations to subsequent learning experiences: a study of Confucian-heritage international students' perspectives on an intensive English course in one New Zealand polytechnic**

My name is Lee Mui Choong. I am currently enrolled in the Master of Education degree in the Department of Education at Unitec New Zealand. I am seeking your consent to carry out my research on a sample of eight Confucian-heritage international students who are pursuing Level 5 of the Certificate of Intensive English course (CIE course). I plan to conduct my research in your department during Term 3 and Term 4 of this year.

The aims of my research are to study the initial learning expectations of Confucian-heritage culture (CHC) international students from China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan before they commence the CIE course, factors that influence their formation of pre-course expectations and the students' subsequent learning experiences when they are studying at Kia ora Polytechnic.

I will be collecting data using face to face interviews with eight international students from Level 5 of CIE. The interview will be approximately 60 to 90 minutes duration and will be conducted individually in the Kia ora Polytechnic Library's study room. I will explain to the participants the aims of the research before they volunteer. Participant must consent to take part and are allowed to choose whether or not they wish to participate. I will also seek the participants' informed consent for the use of a digital voice recorder.

All data collected will be kept completely confidential. All information collected will be stored in a password protected file and only my supervisor and I will have access to this information. Therefore, your organisation will be not be identified and no names of the participants will be mentioned in the Thesis.

I hope that you will consent to my research which forms the thesis for my Master of Education.

My supervisor is Dr Sophie Alcock and she can be contacted by:

(Details removed)

Yours sincerely

Lee Mui Choong

**UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2012-1053**

**This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from July 2012 to July 2013. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.**

**Appendix E****CONSENT FORM [ Kia ora Polytechnic ]**

Permission to carry out research on CertIntEng programme and collection of documents related to recruitments of students and their learning experiences.

TO: Lee Mui Choong

Hillcrest, North Shore

0627 Auckland

FROM: Head of Department

Department of Language Studies

Kia ora Polytechnic

DATE: 24 July 2012

RE: Master of Education – Research on International Students

Title of Thesis

From pre-course expectations to subsequent learning experiences: a study of Confucian-heritage international students' perspectives on an intensive English course in one New Zealand Polytechnic

I have been given and have understood the explanation of this research and I give permission for the research to be conducted in my department. I also give consent to the collection of documents relevant to the research. I understand that the name of my department and my organisation will not be used in any public reports.

Signed [Details removed]

Head of Department  
Department of Language Studies  
Kia ora Polytechnic