UNDERSTANDING INFORMAL LEARNING AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS THROUGH THEIR BROKERING PRACTICES

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Abstract

While informal learning is recognised as an important part of academic learning, the significance of learning outside the prescribed curriculum has been largely overlooked in the literature on international students. The purpose of this study is to better understand the informal academic learning practices of international EAL students through the concept of brokering. In this study, brokering practices are defined as academic help-seeking social interactions outside the formal curriculum. Examples of brokering interactions include translating academic-related information or making explicit the requirements of an academic task.

This paper is based on an ethnographic study involving ten international EAL students at a New Zealand university. Students were interviewed regularly over the period of one academic semester. Based on initial findings, the article details the characteristics of peer and non-peer brokers. Brokers were chosen because they had prior experience or recognised expertise in particular academic areas. At times, they were also chosen because they could communicate in the students' native language. It is hoped that understanding the different types of brokers will allow institutions to develop more effective strategies in supporting international students' academic needs.

Introduction and background

Enrolments of international students in New Zealand and other countries such as Australia, Canada, US and UK are no doubt a source of significant financial benefits. In New Zealand, the total contribution of international education for the year 2015/2016 was more than $4 billion, with the university sector representing almost a third of that figure (Education New Zealand, 2016b). A large majority of international students originate from 'non-Western' countries and have English as an additional language (EAL). According to the literature (e.g., Andrade, 2006; Smith & Khawaja, 2011), students' English language proficiency levels and adjustment to a different pedagogical environment contribute to their academic success..

Much of the discussion about international students' academic learning is in the context of classroom interactions such as asking questions and participating in group discussions (Campbell & Li, 2008; Johnson, 2008; Lee, Farruggia, & Brown, 2013). However, academic learning is not contained within classrooms and formal structures (Barnett, 2007; Barron, 2006). Several studies have recognised that out-of-classroom interactions are significant contributions to students' academic learning whether these interactions are face-to-face (Goodwin, Kennedy, & Vetere, 2010; Hommes et al., 2012; Krause, 2007) or mediated through social networking sites (Madge, Meek, Wellens, & Hooley, 2009; Vivian, Barnes, Geer, & Wood, 2014). The importance of informal academic learning, nonetheless, has tended to be overlooked in the literature on international students.

This article reports on doctoral research that uses the concept of brokering to examine the informal academic learning practices of international EAL students at a New Zealand university. Based on a sociological concept, brokering takes place where interactions between individuals or groups are constrained by differences in language and culture (Stovel, Golub, & Milgrom, 2011). The broker is an intermediary who assists in the transfer or exchange of valued resources such as knowledge and opportunities between these separated communities. In this research, brokering practices among international EAL students are understood as academic help-seeking social interactions outside the formal curriculum within the host academic environment. Several studies (e.g., Che, 2013; Li, Clarke, & Remedios, 2010; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Seloni, 2012; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015) have alluded to brokering practices among international students, even if the term is not explicitly used. Nonetheless, brokering practices remain largely unexamined in terms of the dynamics of the interactions and the characteristics of brokering relationships.

In researching brokering practices, an important consideration was that engaging in brokering interactions as informal learning was likely to be taken-for-granted as part of everyday life and therefore not always visible to the learners themselves (Eraut, 2004). Another consideration was that given the routine use of digital media for personal communication among young adults (Helles, 2012; Madell & Muncer, 2007; Thompson, 2013), brokering may occur through digital means (e.g. mobile text messages), in addition to taking place during face-to-face communication. Furthermore, these help-seeking interactions were likely to feature more prominently in students' initial period of study where they faced the greatest adjustment challenges (Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen, & Van Horn, 2002; Ward, Okura, Kennedy, & Kojima, 1998).

In order to investigate students' particular social practices, an ethnographic methodology was used as ethnography emphasises gaining the insiders' perspective of what happens in their natural settings (O'Reilly, 2012). More specifically, *focused* ethnography was chosen as it adapts conventional ethnographic methods to address the challenges of investigating everyday social interactions that occur within a specific timeframe and context, as well as in multiple sites (Higginbottom, Pillay, & Boadu, 2013; Knoblauch, 2005).

In this research, the goal was to understand the nature of brokering interactions of ten international EAL students during their initial academic semester of study. Nine of them were of Chinese ethnicity and whose language and culture were familiar to the researcher, thus facilitating an emic understanding of the research topic. Rather than conducting unstructured interviews common in traditional ethnography, regular semi-structured interviews were conducted during the semester with the primary purposes of identifying and understanding academic help-seeking interactions participants had with others, and exploring opportunities to gain access to these brokering interactions. Observations of brokering interactions were not always feasible because of their irregular or unpredictable occurrences, as well as concerns with privacy issues. Nonetheless, three of the ten participants provided data on brokering interactions. Obtaining interactional data from these key informants capitalised on technological affordances more so than depending on taking field notes of social activity. Two participants provided visual records of mobile text message exchanges with their brokers, while brokering interactions between one participant and her broker were observed in addition to being audio recorded.

Based on initial data analysis, the article provides an overview of different types of brokers that the participants engaged with. Students approached peers as well as non-peers (e.g.,

learning support staff) as brokers. The main reason for choosing a particular broker was the person's prior experience or expertise in a particular academic domain or skill. In certain cases, a shared language allowed the broker to translate or interpret information for the student. The article concludes with some implications for enhancing support for international EAL students.

International students and academic learning

The economic value of international students enrolled in higher education has increased in the past decade. The number of foreign tertiary students enrolled worldwide has more than doubled, with an average annual growth rate of almost 7% (OECD, 2014). Most international students studying abroad come from Asia. In New Zealand, the two main source countries in 2015 were China and India (Education New Zealand, 2016a). International students make up about 15% of the total tertiary student population in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2016) and university tuition fee revenue from international students in 2015 was more than NZ$370m (Education New Zealand, 2016a).

Academic support is a common theme in the literature on international EAL students. Numerous studies have identified various challenges EAL students face in academic learning, particularly in the classroom context, such as inadequate English proficiency and differing educational expectations (Johnson, 2008; Lee et al., 2013), and being isolated from the host community (Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, & Ramia, 2008; Ward & Masgoret, 2004). However, little is understood about how international EAL students engage in academic learning outside the formal structures of learning.

Informal learning is "any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge, or skill that occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricular criteria" (Livingstone, 2006, p. 206). However, the literature on informal learning among students is often related to peer tutoring, cooperative learning, and peer assessment *within* the classroom (Boud, Cohen, & Sampson, 2001; Topping, 2005), overlooking informal learning that occurs *outside* formal structures of instruction (Barron, 2006; Hommes et al., 2012). While informal learning may arise as part of one's daily activities or routines (Marsick & Volpe, 1999), it may also be a response to the inadequacies of formal learning where learners face barriers such as low self-confidence, poor previous educational experiences and inappropriate content in and delivery of formal instruction (McGivney, 1999).

For international EAL students, the barriers in formal instruction are highlighted in the literature on students' academic challenges. However, predominant themes of poor English and passive communication tend to present a deficit view of EAL learners (Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Ryan & Louie, 2007). Exploring informal learning as a space where learners overcome language and cultural gaps can thus potentially re-position EAL learners as agents of their academic learning, exploring how they "mak[e] proactive choices" (Marginson, 2013).

Brokering as informal learning

The concept of brokering offers an alternative lens through which to view EAL students' informal learning. As a sociological concept, brokering refers to the transfer of resources such as services, information and knowledge, from one entity to another over gaps in organisational or social structure (Gould & Fernandez, 1989; Stovel et al., 2011). In terms of social structure, gaps may arise from the differences in language and culture between these entities. It is the broker who has connections to these separated entities that allow the transfer of resources between them. Extending the brokering concept to EAL students' informal learning, one can

then conceive of learning as seeking academic resources, not directly from classroom instruction, but through someone who also has access to those resources.

Brokering as a learning concept has been used in the literature on immigrant communities, particularly in terms of language and literacy learning. The phenomenon of *language brokering*, defined as "interpreting and translating performed by bilinguals … without special training" (Tse, 1996, p. 48) has been researched in family (Eksner & Orellana, 2012; Martinez, McClure, & Eddy, 2008; Morales, Yakushko, & Castro, 2012) and classroom contexts (Coyoca & Lee, 2009; J. S. Lee, Hill-Bonnet, & Raley, 2011). With families, it is the children of newly arrived immigrants who are brokers for their parents, translating and interpreting a range of texts such as school notices, bank letters and application forms. In the classroom context, bilingual students broker for their classmates who are in the process of learning a second language.

A related concept, *literacy brokering*, further illustrates the brokering phenomenon with a focus on understanding the underlying meaning and implication so unfamiliar texts and practices (Perry, 2009). Perry's (2009) research on literacy brokering among Sudanese refugee families in the United States documented how family members helped one another understand and interpret a range of written genres such as unsolicited mail, texts from school, as well as webpages and online forms.

Thus the literature on language brokering and literacy brokering provides a starting point for understanding how brokering may take place among EAL international students. International EAL students may seek help in translation or interpretation of academic information and texts, as well as with understanding the expectations of assignments and underlying meaning of other academic demands.

Brokering in higher education

Brokering, while not termed as such, has been alluded to in the higher education literature that explores academic-related social interactions among students. Several studies demonstrate how students seek help from peers to meet various academic demands such as completing assignments (Li, Clarke, & Remedios, 2010; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Wakimoto, 2007; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015), with some studies specifically on how students seek help with academic writing (Che, 2013; Nam & Beckett, 2011; Séror, 2011). Students may also seek advice on interacting with instructors and peers from the host academic community (Li & Collins, 2014; Seloni, 2012). The literature further suggests that students seek brokers who are already part of their existing social relationships. These brokers may be native-English speaking peers with whom students have shared experiences, or who come from a similar cultural background (Che, 2013; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Seloni, 2012; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015). Nonetheless, little is understood about the motivations behind brokering interactions.

Considering the gaps in the literature on informal learning among international EAL students, the purpose of this research was to investigate the nature of brokering practices among such students at a university in New Zealand. The article reports on data that relate to the following research questions:

- What aspects of academic learning are being brokered?
- Who are the students' brokers?
- Why are these brokers chosen?

The present study

I recruited ten students from two faculties (related to social sciences) at the university, all of whom signed the consent forms to participate in the research, and had the chance to ask questions about the research (see Appendix for a summary of the participants). These students were international students for whom whose English was an additional language, and in most cases, a foreign language in their home country. They were enrolled for the first time in a New Zealand university, pursuing either undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications. The initial period of study is where adjustment challenges are the greatest (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002; Ward et al., 1998). As such, the target timeframe of the research was students' initial academic semester (15 weeks long), a period with potentially a lot of brokering activity.

In order to examine a specific type of informal learning (i.e. brokering practices) within the limited time period of one academic semester of 15 weeks, I used the methodology of focused ethnography. As much of the literature on brokering in higher education tended to rely on self-reported data such as interview responses, an ethnographic methodology was chosen to enable a close and sustained observation of human behaviour (O'Reilly, 2012). However, while conventional ethnography stresses the importance of long-term immersion and participant observation, focused ethnography responds to the short-term or temporary nature of specific social or cultural phenomena by using a flexible approach in data collection (Higginbottom et al., 2013; Knoblauch, 2005).

As a form of informal learning, brokering practices were likely to be "implicit, unintended, opportunistic and unstructured" (Eraut, 2004, p. 250), thus making conventional ethnographic observation challenging. Furthermore, students themselves may not be conscious of their brokering interactions if such informal learning is taken for granted. Thus, the data collection strategy was to first conduct regular semi-structured interviews individually with participants in order to focus their attention on help-seeking interactions related to their academic-related activities. These interviews were conducted once every two or three weeks, and each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes. Subsequently, in the course of the regular interviews, I explored opportunities to observe brokering interactions between participants and their brokers.

As the objective of the research was to investigate the nature of brokering practices among international students, as a researcher, I was conscious of not being a participant myself in the very phenomenon under investigation. Furthermore, the literature on brokering in higher education suggests that brokering interactions were likely to take place in personal or private spaces (e.g. Nam & Beckett, 2011; Séror, 2011; Li & Collins, 2014; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015). Thus, instead of engaging in participant observation, being a detached observer was more appropriate in this context where active participation was not possible or desirable (Higginbottom et al., 2013; Knoblauch, 2005).

Three of the ten participants, Kim, Linda and Jane, granted me permission to access their brokering interactions in the following ways: i) obtaining copies of draft assignments annotated by brokers; ii) observing and audio recording face-to-face interactions; and iii) obtaining screenshots (i.e. images of what is displayed on the screen of a device) of mobile phone messages exchanged between participants and their brokers. In the latter two cases, permission to use the interactions as data was also sought from the participants' brokers. In addition, Linda and Jane were selected to continue as participants in the following academic semester as their

willingness to allow access to observations and other records of brokering interactions was thought to lead to additional data on their brokering practices.

The following sections reports on initial findings on the types of brokers sought by the participants. Although there was a variety of evidence of brokering interactions, i.e. interview recounts, observations, images of text exchanges and annotated writing, this article looks primarily at interview data.

Initial findings
Peer v. non-peer brokers
Students approached peer as well as non-peer brokers. Peers can be defined as "status equals or matched companions, [involving] people from similar social groupings who are not professional teachers" (Topping, 2005, p. 631). In addition, "[t]hey may have considerable experience and expertise or they may have relatively little … Most importantly, they do not have power over each other by virtue of their position or responsibilities" (Boud et al., 2001, p. 4). In this research, peers can refer to those who are students, just as the participants are, or those who participants identify with as belonging to a similar social grouping, such as the same age group. In contrast, non-peers refer to those who have a higher position or status; in this research, they are firstly, non-students, and secondly, have a position of power over, or responsibility towards the participants such as being a host parent (as part of a homestay arrangement) or a staff member at the university.

Non-peer brokers
Non-peer brokers predominantly provided help with academic writing and language use. These non-peer brokers were mostly learning support staff who were not part of the formal instruction team (i.e., the participants' subject lecturers and tutors). These staff members were either appointed by the faculty for assisting the faculty's students, or part of the larger learning support team for the university. Their role can be broadly described as assisting students with their assignments; such assistance includes understanding the assignment question, providing comments on the organization of the writing and pointing out grammatical errors.

Learning support staff were often called on by participants to help with the organisation of their writing, using appropriate vocabulary and correcting grammatical errors:

> I think the content is ok, but about the expression, especially expression in academic English is a little hard. Because I don't know very long words. I just write sentences is more like in oral English, it's not academic. That's one point. And another is I can't express or make a very clear statement. The thoughts are all in my head but I can't make it very organised or clear to express. So I need a lot of proofreading to make sure that everything is organised, it makes sense, it's meaningful. (Linda, Interview, 5 April 2016)

> The last time I went to see a tutor, she didn't understand my writing. She asked me a few questions about what I was writing about. And I explained it. That tutor looking at my grammar was very detailed. She helped me re-write my sentence. (Jane, Interview, 5 May 2016)

> [INTERVIEWER (referring to draft assignment): From what I can see, it was primarily correcting grammar mistakes and filling in missing words to make it more coherent.] And changing the word use, because sometimes I'm still

not familiar with the meaning. At least the words that are correctly used, or correct to express my ideas. (Kim, Interview, 31 May 2016)

Thus these non-peer brokers could be seen as literacy brokers who made explicit the mechanics of academic writing by re-organising participants' writing, changing word use and correcting grammatical errors.

Peer brokers

Non-peer brokers were involved mostly in literacy brokering interactions; peer-brokers, by contrast, were involved in a range of interactions such as sharing academic resources, providing advice on how to interpret and complete assignments, as well as translating and interpreting information.

Students often sought help from their peers such as classmates or those in their social networks. Examples of peers from social network include former classmates who attended the same preparatory programmes at the university and friends of friends. In the case of nine of the ten participants who were Chinese nationals or of Chinese ethnicity, their peer brokers were often students from the same country (co-nationals) or with whom they shared a common language. The choice of co-nationals as brokers appear to concur with the findings found in the literature (Che, 2013; Li & Collins, 2014; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015).

Co-national peer brokering is illustrated in the following examples where brokering occurred in the classrooms but outside the purview of formal instruction. During lectures and tutorials, some students helped each other with obtaining information related to academic tasks. In some of these situations, the information was only available during the lesson; for example, an instructor's verbal explanation, or information on presentation slides that was not available elsewhere. Because it was difficult to take down notes when the lecturer spoke too fast or when there was too much information, students then felt that it was necessary to record that information for responding to assignments or preparing for tests:

> During tutorial, we will use our camera to take photos of the answer on the screen. ... There could be some lessons that I did not take photos of. And some he did not take photos of. So when we meet, we are sharing with each other the answers we have. (Henry, Interview, April 2016)

> The tutor was taking about important points about the test. And I used my phone to record. But I couldn't take the photo of the PPT, so I asked her if she could help me take a photo of it. … [INTERVIEWER: So you recorded, and she took photos?] Yes … perhaps what we're doing is not right. … She shared with me what she took photos of. (Annie, Interview, 11 April 2016)

In another situation, students were helping each other complete an in-class task:

> (During tutorials, there are) four of us sitting together and referring to each other's answers. [INTERVIEWER: Do other students do the same thing, the local students?] I don't know, but they also sit together and discuss, but I don't know if they will look at each other's answers. … For the locals, there's not much obstacle, they can freely respond. … We usually ask, hey, where can we find the answer to this question (laughs), which is which page and

which part. We don't usually talk and exchange opinions. Most of the time we're looking for the answer. (Jane, Interview, 22 September 2016)

Here, the help students received was not related to their *understanding* of academic material, but rather, *acquiring* adequate material in order to complete academic tasks. In such instances, there is, what can be termed, *resource brokering*, where resource refers to materials "that can be drawn on by a person … in order to function effectively" (Resource, 2017). In these examples of resource brokering, students were co-brokering by exchanging with each other information that was valuable to them for a common academic task. Participants themselves further suggested that acquiring task-specific resources was not part of regular classroom behaviour. For example, Annie was hesitant about whether what she was doing was appropriate, implying that her actions were not common among the rest of the students. Jane's remarks about having a (language) 'obstacle' and not talking or exchanging opinions as the domestic students were doing seem to suggest that she and her Chinese classmates were not engaged in typical tutorial behaviour.

Peer brokers may be chosen on the basis of co-nationality, however, perhaps a more important criterion was whether the person had relevant knowledge or prior experience, as suggested in several studies (Nam & Beckett, 2011; Séror, 2011; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015). In the case of this research, participants were not always keen on approaching fellow Chinese classmates for assistance, especially when their needs went beyond resource brokering. Even though they could communicate with each other in their native language, their classmates' similar lack of knowledge and experience did not help to resolve problems related to understanding of English academic content:

> … I try to talk to them in Chinese. … I ask them some question about this but they don't have a really clear organisation of this. And so sometimes we discuss the questions, it is useful but just discuss. We don't have confidence in our own answers. (Henry, Interview, 16 March 2016)
> There are many [Chinese], but I only know a few. And among them, I won't ask some of them because I don't know if they know what's going on or not. They also look lost and confused (laughs). (Jane, Interview, 11 April 2016)

Sarah, for example, was faced with the challenge of writing about a wide-ranging topic with a 100 word limit.

> "I've got some homework … and we have to give examples, but no more than 100 words. I don't know how to answer that. And also the teacher suggested to us to answer from these three aspects which is, language, policy, and culture. But I thought it was very big topic, and I don't know how to answer it in 100 words … it's only 100 words and I have to give examples. How do I give examples in 100 words? … The tutor … didn't really give a clear answer. Then I asked Kevin after the tutorial. He said, maybe you can choose the aspect of language. (Sarah, Interview, 9 May 2016)

Without a clear response from the tutor, Sarah approached Kevin, a co-national who was older than the majority of the students. They studied three subjects in common and were in the same project group for one of the subjects. Kevin had a higher level of English proficiency than other Chinese students and was recognised as being a wiser and more experienced person by his classmates:

I can trust him. He doesn't make too many mistakes. If he does, He will say, sorry, I'm wrong. Other people will make excuses, like saying it was too many years ago. Kevin is not like that, he will say, I am wrong. He is really responsible. (Sarah, Interview, 4 April 2016)

In another example, Kim approached an Indian international student about a written assignment. Although Kim was more comfortable communicating in Chinese, she nonetheless had several things in common with her non-Chinese classmate – that they were both international students and embarking on a similar course with common subjects:

"I met an Indian girl and this is also her first year of postgrad we are somehow in the situation and we have the same feelings as well. We would catch up with each other about what is going on, especially how we can do the assignments."(Kim, Interview, 15 March 2016)

While sharing the same circumstances may have facilitated their brokering interaction, it was the broker's near-native level of English proficiency that led Kim to refer to a well-written sample for her own assignment:

"… the Indian girl, she is really good at English because for her she studied her degree in India all in English. So for her, somehow English for her is her first language. And she is willing to share on how she organises her assignment. Because lecturers only say, oh just follow the APA format, include this and this. But for me I'm not sure how to organise the whole project, and make it easier for the lecturer to read my project. Yesterday she shared on one report she submitted, how she organised everything, and how much effort she had put in. That makes me have a very basic and general plan for how I can do it in my assignment."(Kim, Interview, 5 April 2016)

In the above two examples, it can be seen that sharing a common nationality or language with brokers was not as important as the brokers having the ability to successfully manage academic tasks.

In the final example of peer brokers, it was a combination of common language and greater expertise that allowed them to be useful brokers for participants. These brokers were those who had taken the same or similar subjects as before, sometimes referred to as *seniors*. Sarah, for example, approached a Chinese student, an acquaintance from her language preparatory programme, because he had previously taken the subject and did very well in it:

When I arrived there, he was already there for half a year. And he's very helpful. He arrived earlier, and he lives with some local people, so his speaking skills is better than me. And I ask him for help for translation (laughs). … He's really good at studying. He got A last year in Economics, and he just had a test for Accounting, and he received 100. … So I asked my senior who is also Chinese. I asked him for suggestions on how to answer the short answer [questions]. … Yes, I can ask my tutor but I thought my English is not good enough. So I asked my senior who took this paper last year…. He taught me some skill to answer the short answers. He said, you don't need to write a lot. You just need to draw some pictures for supply

> curve, demand curve. He told me, you just need to mark the changes and briefly explain it, that will be okay. (Sarah, Interview, 9 May 2016)

Similarly, Henry found that he benefitted from having a senior student, whom he knew through a classmate, explain to him how to prepare for a test:

> I was totally confused about this because the tutor talks so fast. I tried to ask another Chinese guy in our group for help, but he cannot follow what the tutor said as well. … The senior gave me the examples from her material, which is in the test when she studied this paper. I guess the reason why this approach is more effective and efficient is she taught [me] in Chinese and English both. This way reduces the time that I translate the information from English to Chinese. (Henry, Email, 6 April 2016)

> When I revise for the test, I may ask senior. … Before the test, I will probably ask about special features of the test, or ask about the sample questions that I don't understand. (Henry, Interview, 4 May 2016)

These seniors were not merely resource brokers (e.g. transferring or sharing materials), but they were also *language brokers*, i.e., translating and explaining English terms in the students' native language, as well as *literacy brokers*, i.e., making explicit the ways to fulfil the requirements for academic tasks.

Conclusion

The initial findings on the different types of brokers demonstrate the different strengths of peer and non-peer brokers. Non-peer brokers, in this case the learning support staff, were equipped with knowledge and skills to address the specific areas of students' academic writing. Peer brokers, on the other hand, have the advantage of immediacy – being timely with assistance or advice, having common academic goals, and/or sharing a common language.

While it is common for universities to have learning support staff to address students' academic needs, it is less common for universities to facilitate peer support for international EAL students. The findings suggest that academically competent *seniors*, particularly those from the same or similar backgrounds as first year students, could play an important role as peer brokers. Thus one recommendation is for universities to facilitate peer support where relatively more knowledgeable and more experienced students can potentially act as academic mentors or advisors for incoming students. Ideally, these students would have similar backgrounds as the incoming students, whether in terms of shared culture, or shared background as international students. Another approach for this recommendation is to increase informal social interactions between cohorts of students, thereby providing new students opportunities to meet with suitable academic brokers.

Peer brokers are important social connections that enhance international EAL students' academic learning. It is hoped that future research will consider students' informal academic learning practices as an integral part of their overall overseas educational experiences.

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Appendix:
Summary of participants' background

Name	Gender	Age	Home country	Level of study	English entry qualification
Kim	F	Early 20s	Taiwan	Postgraduate diploma, first year, first semester (Completed Bachelor in Taiwan)	English language programme in NZ
Linda	F	Early 20s	China	Postgraduate diploma, first year, first semester (Completed Bachelor in China)	IELTS in home country
Josh	M	Early 20s	Malaysia (Chinese ethnicity)	Honours year, first semester (Completed Bachelor in Malaysia)	English medium university in home country
Jane	F	Early 20s	China	Undergraduate, first year, first semester	IELTS in home country
Sarah	F	Early 20s	China	Undergraduate, first year, first semester	English language programme in NZ
Henry	M	Early 20s	China	Undergraduate, first year, first semester	University preparatory programme in NZ
Annie	F	Early 30s	China	Undergraduate, first year, first semester	English language programme in NZ
Kevin	M	Early 40s	China	Undergraduate, first year, first semester	IELTS in home country
Cindy	F	Early 20s	Japan	Undergraduate, first semester of an exchange programme	TOEFL in home country
Simon	M	Early 20s	China	Undergraduate, first year, second semester	English language programme in home country